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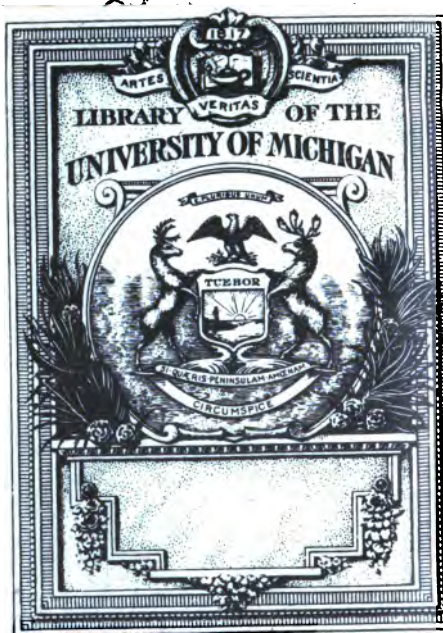
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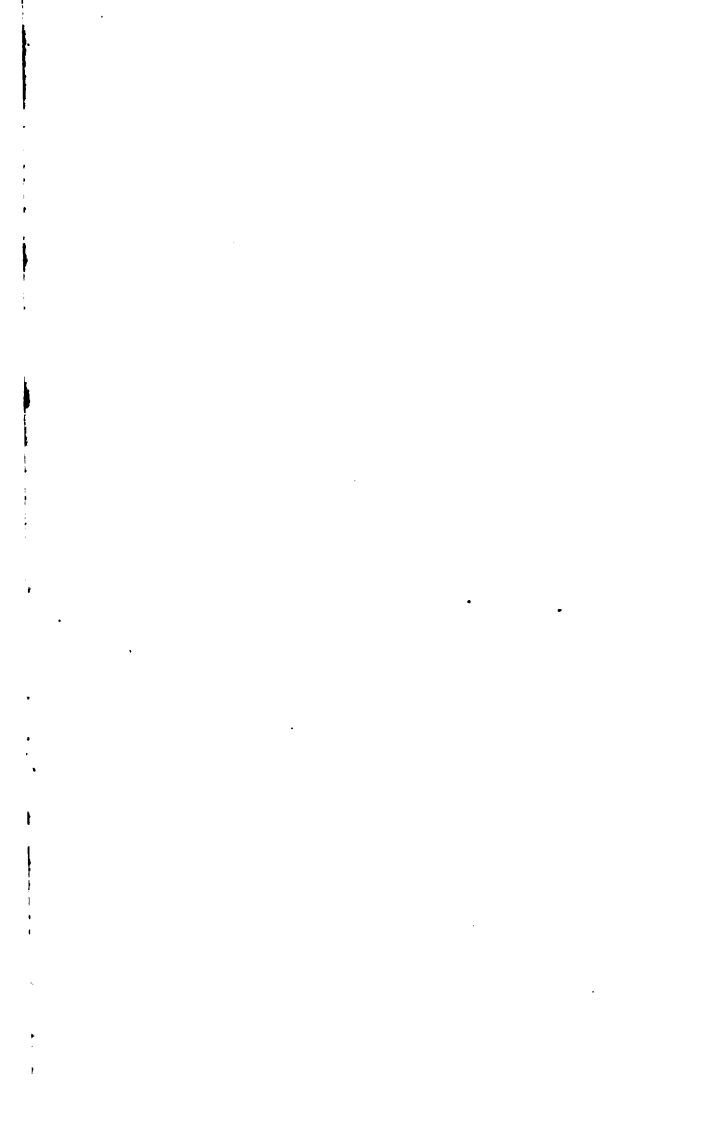
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THE  
  
LIFE OF WICLIF.

BY

CHARLES WEBB LE BAS, M.A.

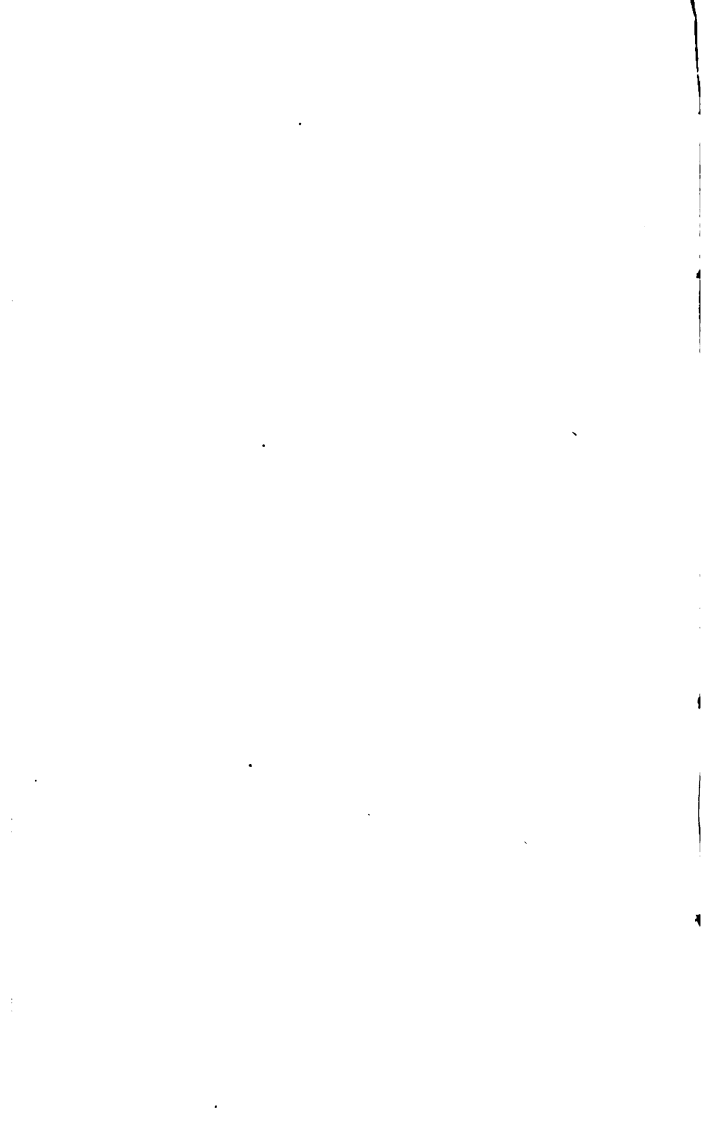
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## PREFACE.

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THE object of the following work is to produce, within a reasonable compass, the substance of the information which has been preserved to us, relative to a very extraordinary man; a man whose strength of character, doubtless, made an impression, on the mind of his country, which has never been effaced. The notice of him by Fox has been compared to a piece of quaint and fantastic Mosaic. Like the other writings of the martyrologist, it affects us in something of the same manner, as the portraitures and groups on the "storied window" of one of our cathedrals. We retire from the contemplation of it with certain feelings of veneration and delight, which a more finished and artificial masterpiece might, possibly, fail to inspire. In this instance, however, his work is far too indistinct and imperfect to satisfy the taste, or the

understanding, of an inquiring age. It is, besides, remarkable for one glaring omission. It leaves wholly unnoticed the great and immortal achievement of Wiclif—his translation of the Bible into English.

The life of our Reformer by Mr. Lewis did much towards the supply of former deficiencies. It is a laborious, and, upon the whole, a faithful compilation; but it possesses but feeble attractions for the general reader. The very circumstance which renders it valuable as a repertory, will, probably, make it somewhat repulsive to those, who prefer a fabric carefully wrought up, to a collection of raw materials. It is loaded with copious extracts from the writings of Wiclif; which, though they undoubtedly strengthen its authority, have, nevertheless, the effect of interrupting the narrative, and of burdening the memory and the attention of the reader.

The most recent of Wiclif's biographers is Mr. Vaughan: and to the labours of this gentleman I have great obligations to acknowledge. He appears to have prepared himself for his task by a more complete and scrupulous

examination of all the extant writings of Wiclif, than has, probably, ever been undertaken before. The apology for Wiclif, compiled by Dr. James, upwards of two centuries ago, was, principally, the result of a careful search into such of the Wiclif manuscripts as could be found in the Bodleian library. Even Mr. Lewis regrets that he was without opportunities or facilities for acquiring a perfect acquaintance with the works of the Reformer. But there seems to be no repository of ancient literature in the empire, which has escaped the industry of Mr. Vaughan. In some respects, I have, accordingly, found his work a most invaluable guide; for his diligence has enabled him to ascertain the date of many of Wiclif's performances, with an approach to precision which had never before been attained; and, thus, to trace out, with greater success than any former writer, the progress and development of the Reformer's convictions.

I have further to declare myself deeply indebted to the liberality of Mr. Vaughan and his publishers, for their kind and ready permission to print, from his work, the catalogue of Wic-

lif's writings, which forms the concluding chapter of this volume. It is, unquestionably, the most complete account of his works which has ever yet been laid before the public.

It has been thought advisable to prefix to this volume two introductory chapters, exhibiting a brief view of Christianity,—in Europe, generally, and in this country more particularly,—up to the middle of the fourteenth century; the period at which the name of Wiclif began to be celebrated. Two supplementary chapters are, also, added at the end, containing a succinct notice of the exertions of his followers, and the fate of his doctrines, in the interval between his death, and the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

The public will be gratified to learn, that the University of Oxford is about to publish Wiclif's Version of the Old Testament; and that the Rev. J. Forshall, and F. Madden, Esq., both Librarians of the British Museum, are preparing the same for the Clarendon Press.

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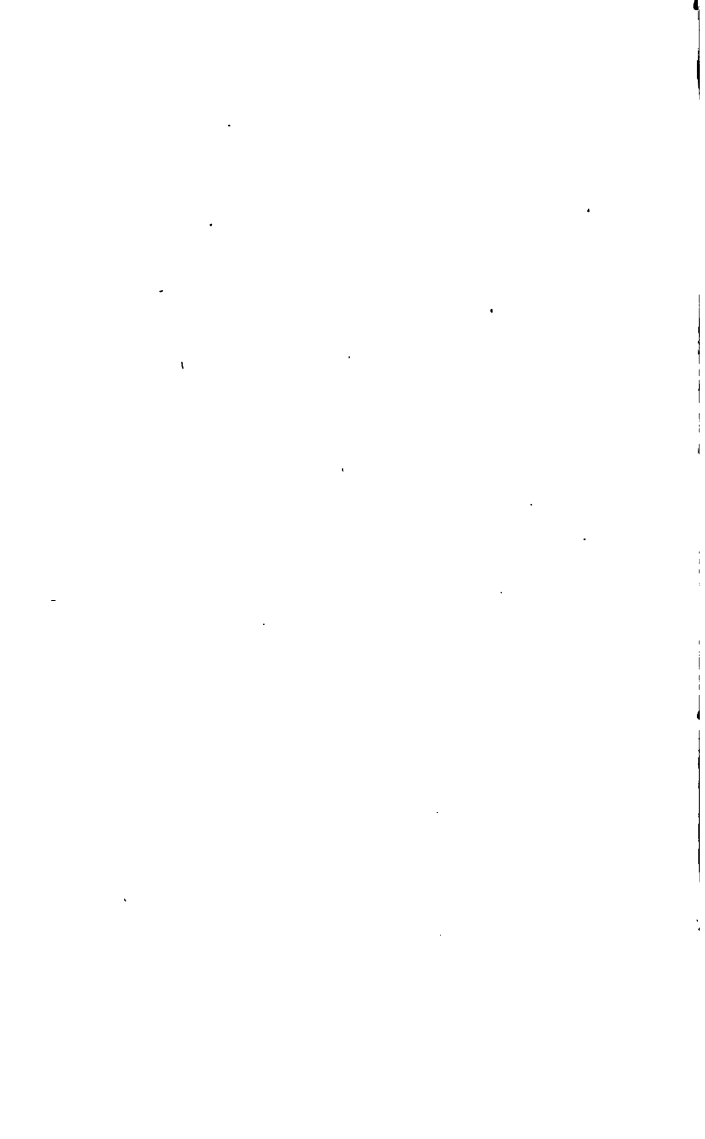
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# LIFE OF WICLIF.

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## INTRODUCTION.

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### CHAPTER I.

*General View of the gradual corruption of Christianity, to the middle of the fourteenth century.*

It has been remarked that Christianity is a jewel of inestimable and unchangeable value; but that it is grotesquely or beautifully set, according to the condition of the public taste, or feeling, or knowledge, at different periods of the world, and in different states of society. It is one melancholy office of ecclesiastical history, to exhibit the fantastic varieties displayed by human passion, and human interest, in the enchasing and the use of this glorious gem: and nothing can well be more mournful than the spectacle which it frequently presents to the view of those, who can be content to look upon the mere surface of things, and who gladly spare themselves the pain of a laborious search into the ways of Providence, or the hidden working of the human heart. Persons of this description will, probably, be tempted to moralize upon the scenes which pass in review before them, in the following strain:—A pearl of ineffable price, they will say, has been delivered into the custody of man by the Eternal Son of God himself; given them, not only to be their chiefest pride and joy, but to be as the very talisman of their peace and safety; their symbol of life and victory. And how did they dispose of the unspeakable gift, thus solemnly and

awfully committed to their keeping? They encircled it with worldly vanities and sublunary toys! In the first place, the *wisdom of the wise* was speedily at work upon it: and its celestial brightness was straightway surrounded with the feeble and unsteady glitter of earth-born philosophy. So that the light which first blazed from the breast-plate of our great High Priest, was, in time, dispersed and broken amid the glare of unhallowed fires. And then came the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, and dared to lay a sacrilegious hand on this *elect and costly stone*, and to lift it to the brow of secular voluptuousness and frivolity; there to waste its heavenly splendours, in the midst of the gauds and braveries, wherewith our degenerate nature is fain to disguise its miserable poverty. At last, as it were, to crown the audacious abuse, Ambition seized upon it, and fixed it in her diadem. From that front, where *righteousness unto the Lord* should alone have been written, an ominous and angry splendour was, for ages, seen to issue, more like a consuming fire than the flame of celestial truth. The inestimable diamond had been set in earthly gold. It shone in the midst of gems which had been dug up by the spirit of Mammon; and thus it gave to the attributes of wordly pomp and power, an aspect of unearthly mystery and terror, which overpowered the *flesh and heart* of all who looked upon it.

Such are the thoughts which may naturally be expected to rush into the mind of one, who should expect of the Christian revelation, that it would be like the word of God, when he said, *Let there be light, and there was light*, and that, when the command went forth, the *light* should, at once, *be divided from the darkness*. It is, indeed, but a shallow philosophy, which could tempt any man to imagine, that the operations of the Deity upon the moral chaos of this world, must needs resemble those of the Spirit, which once brooded over the confusion of its material ele-

ments. The notion, however, is one which may, perhaps, be pardonably enough suggested by a high and reverent estimate of God's omnipotence, and by a feeling of pious impatience for the speedy consummation of his gracious designs: and, for the persons who speculate upon the matter in this temper, the proper treatment is, by no means to disguise the most discouraging phenomena which the case presents to us; but, after a candid and courageous statement of them, to recall their thoughts to other considerations,—to lay before them circumstances which may satisfy them, that *God is not slack concerning his promises, as men count slackness*,—to remind them that when we are meditating on the history of his Church, we are meditating on the dealings of One *with whom a thousand years are but as a single day*. Conformably with this view, let us, first, briefly survey the progress of that corruption which saddens the hearts of those, whose eyes are failing with desire for the coming of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The first danger which beset the Gospel was, of course, from the spirit of Paganism. Both the schools of philosophy, and the haunts of vulgar superstition, were pervaded by elements, at mortal variance with the simple essence of Christianity. From the wisdom of the heathen world the new religion had, accordingly, to encounter either the peril of fierce opposition,\* or the still more dangerous offer of coal-

\* The oracles of that wisdom which arrayed itself against the Gospel, were frequently as obscure, as its hostility was vehement and rancorous. The following *words* (for they are only *words*) of Porphyry, the bitterest enemy to Christianity, may fitly enough be recommended to those who complain of the mysterious difficulties of revelation. "God, intellect, and soul, are each of them every where, because no where. But God is every where, and, at the same time, in no place of any being posterior to his nature: but he is only such as he is, and such as he willed himself to be. But intellect is, indeed, in the Deity, yet every where, and in no place of his subordinate essences. And soul is in intellect, and in the Deity, every where, and no where, with respect to body. But body exists in soul, and in intellect, and in God. And though all beings and non-entities proceed from, and exist in the Deity, yet he is neither entities, or non-entities, nor has any subsistence in them. For if he was alone



tion and alliance. If the philosophy of the age were unequal to a conflict with the truth of God, she might, at least, endeavour to hold divided empire with the truth; and, with this view, would naturally be induced to stretch forth to her the right hand of fellowship. The result of this was, that the faith of Christ was gradually transformed into the likeness of a human science, wherein the intellect of man might boldly and freely take its pastime. And if, in those days, the state of the world had been shadowed forth, in mysterious vision, to the eye of seer or prophet, we may easily imagine the spectacle that would have been revealed unto him. He would have seen the form of Divine mercy pouring out upon the earth a sovereign and precious balm for the healing of the nations; and the instant, that it fell, he would behold the chaos of rebellious ingredients below, falling at once into wild insurrection: and from that fermenting commotion, there would seem to rise up a swarm of fantastic and artificial shapes, darkening the air by their multitude, as with an Egyptian plague. The endless and multiform brood of heresies, engendered in the earlier centuries of the Church, were, in truth, no other than the monstrous produce of all the philosophical and religious systems in the world, thrown into prodigious combinations, by the infusion of one new ingredient more powerful than them all. And, even when the turbulence of that conflict had, in some degree, subsided, peace still appeared to be as remote as ever from the Christian world. The spirit of discord had been let loose, and it entered into Christian theology, which, under that unhallowed possession, frequently exhibited the

every where, he would, indeed, be all things, and in all. But because he is, likewise, no where, all things are produced by him: so that they subsist in him because he is every where, but are different from him, because he is no where. Thus, also, intellect being every where and no where, is the cause of souls, &c. &c. &c." This passage is translated from Porphyry, by the Platonist, Mr. Taylor, and is cited by Turner, *Hist. Eng.* p. lv. c. 1. p. 328.

agitation and contortion of an energumen and, in its paroxysms, it gave utterance to *great swelling words of vanity*, concerning the deep and inscrutable things of God. The Trinity and the Incarnation,—themes the most awful and stupendous that can engage the mind of man,—were tossed from mouth to mouth, and from pen to pen, as if they had been flung from heaven to earth, merely to exercise the wit of mortals, and to inflate their arrogance, and to kindle their passions—instead of bringing down their high thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

But, if the *philosophy and vain deceit* of Paganism were injurious to the simplicity which is in Christ, still more fatally infectious were the seductions of its gay ritual and imaginative mythology. With these elements of corruption Christianity was every where surrounded. It was in perpetual contact with things that savoured of a licentious world. The genius of Heathenism was incessantly at work to convert the religion of the Saviour to its own likeness: and we all know how calamitous was its ultimate success. If an Apostle had revisited the earth at the end of four or five centuries from the period of his ministry, and had looked at nothing but the outward and visible form of the Christian Church, he might have been tempted to fear, that the truth for which he had laboured and bled, had been wholly transformed into a gorgeous spectacle, a sort of mystic pageantry,—its painful and laborious Evangelists into pompous actors—its places of worship into splendid theatres. The change which actually had taken place, may be vividly imagined to our thoughts by the remark, that, in primitive and apostolic times, the chalices were of wood, and the ministers of gold: but that in the days of the Church's degeneracy, she was content with golden chalices and wooden priests! This, probably, is one of those complaints, in which truth has been partially sacrificed to the point and vigour of the

saying. But, after all reasonable allowance for exaggeration, it will still remain unquestionable, that the clergy had grievously declined from their *first works*, and had begun to emulate, at least in their external appearance, the superb and costly follies of the world around them. That the public service of God should be honoured by all sober and decent solemnity, is never questioned but by the vulgarest spirit of fanaticism; and we may well believe that it was a fervid zeal for the glory of His name, which originally sought to render the Christian worship honourable in the sight of the heathen. At last, however, the clergy, in the splendour of their apparel, may be said to have well nigh beggared the pomp of "Aaron's wardrobe, and the Flamen's vestry." Their official raiment blazed with gold and purple, and *needlework of divers colours*. Almost every object in the creation was portrayed upon their garments. The more devout among them, indeed, carried scriptural histories emblazoned on their backs; but, even so, their appearance has been compared to that of painted walls. All this outward magnificence was thought to correspond to the sacredness, it may almost be said to the divinity, which now began to gather round the sacerdotal character; and yet he, whose "lips of gold" proclaimed most lavishly the exalted dignity of the priesthood, himself declares that, in his days, the life and soul of piety had fled from the scenes of their holy ministrations. "How awful," he exclaims, "is the picture of the primitive Church exhibited by the Apostle! The Church then was heaven upon earth. The Spirit then ruled in all things. He moved the hearts of those who presided, and filled them with the Divinity; but now we have nothing left but the shadow of these glorious things. The Church now resembles a decayed matron, who has nothing to exhibit but the symbols and indications of her former wealth; the cabinets and the caskets that contained her jewels, and her gold, and her precious

things. Not only have the miraculous gifts been withdrawn from her, but virtue and devotion have fled from the sanctuary. In former days every house was a church; but now the church is no better than a house: nay, many a private house exhibits a scene of order and peace which is a sore rebuke to our places of solemn assembly. The house of God is now a scene of tumult and confusion, which incessantly reminds us of the place of traffic and exchange. The laughter and uproar is such as we hear at the public baths and open market-places. We seem to forget that the church is not a place for idle concourse or worthless recreation, not for worldly business or employment; but that it is the haunt of angels, the realm of the Almighty himself,—another heaven. . . . . The temple is now more like a theatre than a place of religious service and devotion. It shows quite as prodigal a display of the vanities and seductive artifices of dress and decoration. It is chosen as the most commodious spot for licentious intrigues. More bargains are made there, than at the tables of the money-changers. More business is transacted there, than at the usual resorts of trade and commerce. If you wish for the best opportunity of hearing or circulating slander, seek it—not in the usual places of concourse—but in the church. If you are curious about private concerns, or political intelligence, go not to the camp, or to the courts of justice, or to the saloons of the physicians: the church is the place in which the retailers of such matters are always to be found. In short, the spot on which we are now assembled is any thing but a church. Are these abuses and abominations to be endured?"—And yet, at the very time when the spiritual degeneracy called forth these complaints and denunciations, the ecclesiastical rites and offices were supposed to possess an almost supernatural solemnity and power. "Look," says the golden preacher again, "look at that awful table. Recollect why it is placed there. The very sight of

a king's throne causes us to rise and do it reverence. Tremble then at the spectacle before you. Lift up your heart to heaven before the moment arrives which shall draw aside the veil that covers those venerable mysteries, and disclose a band of angels advancing before the presence of their King. The very catechumens, who have not received initiation, can yet understand that, when a prophet or minister of God addresses them, they are in the presence of Jehovah himself, and that their souls should therefore be lifted up from earth. What! shall the vile antics, and the worthless jest of players, and mimics, and harlots, be honoured with breathless and unbidden silence; and shall the message of the Lord of heaven be received with scorn? When he speaks to us of things so stupendous, shall we put on a hardy impudence, which would almost disgrace the brutes?"\* In our perusal of passages of this stamp, abundant allowance must, of course, be made for the fervency and indignation of the preacher. His object evidently is, to awaken the slumbering conscience of his hearers by the terrors of his rebuke, and to shame them into a life more worthy of their high and blessed vocation. Now this is an office, in the discharge of which, the voice of an imaginative and zealous man may sometimes be expected to sound like the thunder; and there would be neither charity nor wisdom in making his language the measure, by which the Christian stature of a whole generation is to be ascertained. Nevertheless, it is quite impossible that words, like those which have been cited, should have found utterance in any period, but one of serious decline from the purity of ancient days; and they are amply confirmed by the censures of other writers, and by the canons of the Church. All this testimony combines to show that, by this time, the priesthood

\* Chrysost. Hom. xxxvi. in 1 Cor. xiv. 33. vol. x. p. 339—341. Ed. Bened. What I have given above is the substance of the preacher's indignant declamation,

was gradually contracting the semblance of a worldly profession, at least in those parts of the empire where grandeur, and wealth, and luxury, were predominant; that the genius of Paganism, despairing of an open conflict against the Imperial faith, was spreading its own fantastic embroidery over the simple and seamless vesture of Christianity; and, not only so, but was beginning to mix up its palatable venom with her sacred and living waters.

As nothing can be more deeply interesting, than to watch Christianity in its state of *transition* from simplicity to corruption,—and as it manifestly was in that state in the days of the great Christian orator, whom we have just heard,—it will scarcely be considered as an impertinent digression, if I venture to solicit the attention of the reader to another burst of his impassioned eloquence, evidently prompted by feelings of the same kindred with those, which, in after ages, filled the world with reliques, and wearied it with pilgrimages. In his thirty-second Homily on the Epistle to the Romans, there is a highly-wrought encomium on the character of St. Paul.\* The following is the substance of the most striking portion of it. “The voice of St. Paul was like the cherubim of the mercy-seat. Jehovah rested on the tongue of the Apostle, as he did on the forms of those celestial Virtues. Its utterance soared to seraphic heights; for what could the voice of a seraph pronounce more sublime than the exclamation. *‘I am persuaded that neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ.’* . . . Would I could behold the dust that formed that mouth, by which Christ spoke of such unutterable things, and by which the Spirit delivered his wondrous oracles to the world. For who shall tell the marvels which

\* Ed. Bened. vol. ix. p. 758, 759.

that mouth accomplished? It expelled dæmons—absolved sins—silenced monarchs—sealed up the tongues of philosophers—brought over the world to God—won barbarians to the study of wisdom—changed the whole frame and proportion of things on earth—and ordered at will the things which are in heaven, according to the mighty power that wrought within him. *Would that I could behold the dust of that heart*, which might truly be called the heart of the whole world—the fountain of blessings without number—the elemental principle of our very life, (for the spirit of life was thence dealt forth to all, and was divided to all the members of Christ;) that vast and mighty heart, which embraced whole cities and nations; which was exalted above the heavens, and was larger than the earth; which was brighter than the sun, and firmer than adamant; that heart which was the tablet of the Spirit, and the book of heavenly grace.—*Would I could behold the dust of those hands* which were galled with fetters, those hands by the imposition of which the Spirit was dispensed, and from which the viper fell into the flame; *would I could see the dust that formed those eyes* which were so illustriously blinded, and which, for the salvation of the world, were soon restored to light; those eyes which looked on earthly things, but saw them not, and which beheld the things that are invisible. *Would I could gaze upon the dust of those feet*, which made the circuit of the earth, yet knew no weariness. *Would that I could see the sepulchre*, where those arms of righteousness and light are now laid up; *those limbs* which are now alive, but which, while he survived, were dead; those limbs which were crucified to the world, and in which Christ alone could be said to live. *Would that I could look upon the ruins of that frame* which was the temple of the Spirit; *of that body*, which, to this hour, girds the great city that contains it, with a defence more indestructible than the strength of wall or bulwark.—And would that

we might not think upon him merely with veneration and astonishment, but fervently imitate his holiness, that we might be worthy hereafter to behold him, and to be made partakers of his unutterable glory." Surely the man who could write this, would willingly have gone a pilgrimage to the ends of the earth, to look upon the remains, which his imagination and his heart did all but worship. In passages such as this, we may behold, in its highest and purest region, the action of that principle which, when it descended among lower natures, engendered little but absurdity and corruption.

It is evident then, that even at this period, a process had commenced, which being unhappily continued through a long course of ages, ended, for the most part, by "drawing down all divine intercourse between God and the human soul into an exterior and bodily form," till at last, as it is expressed by Milton,\* "nearly all the inward parts of worship, which issue from the native strength of the soul, ran lavishly to the upper skin, and there hardened into a crust of formality." But why should our souls be cast down by the vicissitudes of that stupendous conflict, which has been carried on, for ages, between the depravity of man and the glorious grace of God? Let us look up from the depth of our dejection, and our eyes shall be saluted by many a blessed beam of hope and joy, bursting forth from the thickest gloom that shrouds the dispensations of the Almighty. We, in our weakness and impatience may, at times, be tempted to exclaim, *O that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.* And the sceptics and the scoffers may say now, as they said of old, *let the Lord make speed, and hasten his work that we may see it, and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh that we may know it.* But the eye of Faith, though the

\* On Reformation in England.



*vision tarry*, will patiently *wait for it* ; for the chariot wheels of God's providence attend not on the haste and eagerness of man. He hath eternity to work in ; and his dealings refuse all such measurement and reckoning, as can be applied to them by the creatures of a day. Besides,—can it be, that any human eye can look upon the work which had been wrought upon the earth in the earlier ages of the Church, and yet fail to discern the *goings forth* of the Spirit of God ? Can the adversary himself deny that the Gospel had gone abroad, “in the irresistible might of weakness,” *conquering and to conquer* ? Within a moderate space from the day of Christ's ascension, it had been preached to three continents, and began to fill with believers the forum and the camp of the Pagan world. Three centuries had scarcely elapsed, when it had been heard to the very ends of the civilized globe : and, in little more than four, the ancient superstitions had well nigh crumbled into dust before it. And then, what shall we say to its moral triumphs over the passions and the fears which hold mankind in bondage ? What shall we say to the miracles of constancy and devotion which illustrate the primitive annals of the Church ? Can the changes which it wrought, and the victories which it achieved, be paralleled in the history of man ? The scorner may point to the lordly prelates of imperial capitals ; to Paul of Samosata, to Damasus of Rome, to George of Cappadocia. We will turn our eyes to the spiritual fathers of obscure and remote provinces, whose sanctity and whose simplicity were as a *burning and a shining light* to their people. The infidel and the Sadducee may direct the finger of contempt to the iniquitous or dissolute lives of those, who named the name of Christ in the midst of luxury, and splendour, and worldliness. We seek for the glories of the Christian faith in scenes of domestic purity and quiet. The *despisers* will tell us of the schisms and the heresies which tore all Christendom to pieces, and

verified at least one prophecy of our Lord, that he came not to send peace on earth, but that he came to send a sword. Our consolation is to be found in the belief, that God had almost innumerable faithful ones, who dwelt in serenity and peace below those regions of turbulence. The warfare of theology might be raging, as it were, round the mountain heights, and the people of the valleys might frequently hear the sound thereof, and yet be unable to tell whence it came or whither it went : and we are accordingly told that, amid the wildest tumults of controversy, the ears of the populace were often more innocent and holy than the hearts of their teachers.\* A more unrighteous perversion can scarcely be imagined, than to estimate the influences of Christianity by the *phases* which it wears, when examined through the turbid atmosphere of national and political history. No other institution under heaven could endure so iniquitous a test. The annals of the world, we are perpetually told, exhibit little else than a register of folly and of crime ; and, to our sight, the tragedy often deepens as civilization advances, as human interests become more complicated, as human arts advance towards maturity, and as governments expand into activity and power. In proportion as the race of man improves, in the same proportion, frequently, are his passions brought out into bolder relief. The tale of his absurdities and his atrocities becomes more fearfully and more distinctly legible. As the social fabric rises into grandeur and strength, the conflict of principalities and powers becomes more tremendous, and the story of our species more full of terrific interest. And yet, what should we say to one, who persisted in affirming that governments are merely agents of destruction, and that the advancement of science or of art is nothing more than the development of principles, which tend to national decay

\* *Sanctiores sunt aures plebis quam corda sacerdotum*, are the words of Vincentius Lirinensis.

secular dominion, and bring the powers of the world into league with the allurements and the terrors of superstition. The Papacy is not to be contemplated as a mighty scheme of imposture and despotism, constructed conformably to a fixed and regular design, and gradually completed according to a system, conveyed from one generation of deceivers to another. The passions and the wants of a licentious and semi-barbarous world, invited the master-builders to raise up the fabric of spiritual supremacy; while the confusion and anarchy of the West, deprived of the protection of the Imperial presence, demanded the establishment of the temporal dominion. And thus it was, that the chambers of seduction, and the battlements of strength and pride, rose up together, and formed between them, a structure more strange, more fantastic, and, at the same time, more vast and menacing, than could ever have been projected, in the wildest mood of ambition, by the invention or the sagacity of man.

Never, perhaps, since the world began, was there a power, which seemed to unite within itself so many elements of weakness, as the Papacy. The sovereigns were usually aged men, when they ascended the chair of St. Peter, and consequently their reigns were brief. Every pontiff was an insulated individual, united by no ties of kindred to those who went before, or to those who followed after. The elective conclave was a scene of eternal rivalry, intrigue, and conflict. And yet did this rope of sand, as it must have appeared to ordinary eyes, coalesce into such a union of strength and flexibility, that it was able to twine itself round the mightiest of mankind, to bind kings, as it were, with chains, and nobles with fetters of iron. The rod of the arch-magician became a serpent, and the serpent grew into a voluminous monster, which entangled and crushed the monarchs of the forest in its folds. It is impossible, according to any scheme of merely

human philosophy, to account for this example of strength made perfect in weakness, otherwise than by supposing, that the secret of the papal force lay in the public mind and will of Christian Europe. It is altogether incredible, that so much feebleness should have put forth such prodigies of might, if it had not derived its main resources from the exigencies and the defects of the whole social system, during the period of its predominance. The pontifical power and supremacy formed, in fact, a sort of universal sanctuary against the savage turbulence and coarse despotism, of the middle ages. It was, if possible, a still more alluring refuge against the furies and the scorpions of an accusing conscience. It enslaved the judgment, but it gave a license to the passions: and what tyranny is there to which man will not submit, if it does but offer him protection against external violence and internal remorse? if it guards him against lawless and brutal force from without, and relieves him from the horrors of a spiritual conflict within?

That the papal system frequently conferred the blessings of protection on the helpless and the lowly, in times of frightful anarchy and turbulence, it would be most ungracious and absurd to question. It was itself a most gigantic abuse; but then it had the merit of frequently controlling other abuses and enormities, which might, between them, have torn the whole structure of society in pieces. It was in some sort, like the rod of Aaron, which swallowed up the rods of the enchanter. Who has not heard of the *truce of God*, which afforded to the inoffensive and the feeble, four nights out of the seven in which they might sleep in peace? Who does not now perceive, that the chair of St. Peter formed an august tribunal, which often rebuked and curbed the brutal rapine, and merciless oppression, of barons and of princes? It may, indeed, be no pleasing spectacle to see the potentates of the earth at the bridle or the stirrup

of a churchman; or to behold emperors waiting barefoot at the gates of his palace. But, although our indignation may, even now, be kindled by the very recollection of those days, when "the kings of the earth were of one mind, to give their power and their strength unto the beast," our emotions may well be mitigated by the thought, that, in those wretched times, the people were eaten up, as it were bread, by them that called themselves the excellent and the illustrious of the earth: and that humanly speaking, nothing less powerful than the authority of the vicegerent of God, may have been sufficient to save the world from the horrors and oppressions of perpetual barbarism. Again, it is an astounding thing to behold all Europe precipitating herself into the East, and draining out her life-blood and her treasure, at the call of an imperious hierarchy, on the preaching of a fanatical monk. But then, it should be remembered, that, according to all human calculation, nothing but this upheaving of the resources and energies of Christendom, could have rolled back the flood, which the fury of Mohammed had let loose upon the Eastern world; and which, if not arrested, might have swept religion and humanity from the regions of the West.

All these are considerations, which may reasonably satisfy us, that the thoughts of God towards the children of men, were not *wholly* thoughts of evil, when he permitted the mystery of iniquity to grow up into such colossal grandeur. We cannot, without violence to our judgment, or our faith, shut out from our minds the notion of some especial providential agency and interference, shaping and regulating the growth and the formation of this gigantic spiritual empire. There, surely, is something grand and awful in the spectacle of a mental supremacy, controlling the mutinous elements of society, during the wildest periods of barbarism, and often potently interfering to prevent their rushing into ruinous and

exterminating conflict. And then, too, it should never be forgotten, that the same power was, in effect, the sole guardian of intelligence, the sole protector and preserver of literature, in those days of Egyptian darkness. The man is not to be envied, who can reflect, without some emotions of gratitude on those various and noble foundations which, although they may have at last degenerated into haunts and hiding-places of profligacy, formed, nevertheless, the only retreats of learning, civilization, and charity, during a dreary interval of general ignorance and brutality. It would be scarcely too much to affirm that the papal Church, corrupt as it became, was no less than the Ark, which preserved the moral and spiritual life of Christendom from perishing in the flood, that so long overspread the face of the earth. Nay, the most indignant Protestantism will never scruple to confess thus much,—that foul as the Romish Church has been and is, it has preserved the true Catholic doctrine, though under the deepest incrustations of error, and has been over-ruled by God to the purpose of continuing the true Church, and the true faith, so that the gates of hell have not wholly prevailed against them.

This, then, is the praise of the Papal system, that it has done for the Christian world, what, according to human conjecture, and under the actual vicissitudes which have befallen the world, scarcely any other system could have done. The miserable ignorance, corruption, and decrepitude of the Greek and Asiatic Churches, at this day, are examples of what might have been the fate of Christian Europe, if she had been left without a centre of ecclesiastical union and power. The darker side of the picture is well known to all. Among the wants of mankind may be reckoned an appetite for deception; a desire, inherent in our depraved nature, to bring to an agreement the claims of the Deity, with the indulgence of our frailties; a wild impatience for the conveniences and

splendours of a religious structure, in which the luxury of delusion may be enjoyed to the full. And most prodigally did the Romish Church minister to this corrupt demand. Ample and complete indeed, was the apparatus which she provided for the accommodation of all the various passions and propensities of man. When the structure which she raised had reached its perfection, it "had a chamber for every natural faculty of the soul, and an occupation for every energy of the natural spirit. She there permitted every extreme of abstemiousness and indulgence, fast and revelry; melancholy abstraction and burning zeal; subtle acuteness and popular discourse; world-renunciation and worldly ambition; embracing the arts and the sciences and the stores of ancient learning; adding antiquity, and misrepresentation of all monuments of better times; and covering carefully, with a venerable veil, that only monument of better times, which was able to expose the false ministry of the infinite superstition!"\*

It is needless here to "uncover the cup of those deadly and ugly abominations, wherewith this Jeroboam, of whom we speak, hath made the earth so drunk, that it reeled under our feet."† It becomes us, however, with deep humiliation always to remember, that the sorcery which thus drugged the world, was, from the first, most prodigally patronized by the vices and the wants of human nature. We are, further, bound to acknowledge, with gratitude and reverence, the providential care which hath preserved the original ingredients of the chalice, in potency and virtue, sufficient to correct the poison, and, eventually, we trust, to overpower it. She, who hath earned the title of "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," was, nevertheless, compelled, by the wisdom which ordereth all things, and which slumbereth not, to

\* Irving, *Babylon*, &c. *freedomed*, p. 292.

† *Hiddeke*.

guard the life of Christianity ; although her dark enchantment transformed it to the semblance of idolatry and corruption. On the other hand, Europe never can forget the remorseless and sanguinary abuse of her almost superhuman powers. In the annals of Christendom, it is indelibly written, that of all the empires which the world has ever seen or trembled at, the Papacy was the most merciless in the exercise of its predominance, whenever it was left by events to the uncontrolled manifestation of its spirit. Its maxims of government had a uniformity and an inflexibility, like that which distinguished the career and the domination both of its republican and imperial predecessor. The very life and soul of its policy, was to spare the submissive, and trample down the rebellious. If this relentless principle was ever suspended, it never, for a moment, was forgotten or abandoned. It yielded to the pressure and obstruction of circumstances, just as the inundation yields to the impediments and the resistance, offered by the face of the country which it is laying waste. It wound round the base of the mountain and the promontory, which its strength was unable to undermine or to overthrow ; and it held on its stealthy course to the provinces beyond, till the whole land was overwhelmed, and the summits of the hills disappeared beneath the flood. In this very faculty of yielding, lay the secret of its resistless and unconquerable might. And all history bears witness to the desolation which marked the course of its victorious fury. The thirteenth century is disastrously memorable for the murderous crusade against the Albigenses. In the fifteenth, the annals of the Hussites, the Lollards, and the Moriscos, were written in characters of flame and blood. The horrid tragedy is still continued through the two following centuries, in the martyrology of the Reformers and the Huguenots. To name the Inquisition, is to summon up before the memory such prodigies of infernal atrocity, as oppress



and distract the heart, and almost cause it to despair of human nature. In the eighteenth century, indeed, the demon of persecution shrunk and cowered, like a guilty thing, before the advancing light of civilization and intelligence. But to this hour, though the fiend is bound in chains, it is ready, at any moment, to emerge from the pit, should it be able to burst its fetters. Infallibility is the name which it still wears written upon its vesture and on its thigh. In this, it still hopes to conquer. In virtue of this it is, that the spirit of Loyola hath once more descended upon earth, to breathe the breath of life into remains, which, *in the eyes of the unwise*, seemed to be consigned for ever to the dust. This is the voice which, in the hearing of the present generation, has denounced all religious toleration by the name of impiety, and has prohibited the circulation of the Scriptures, as it would prohibit blasphemy.\*

The foregoing contemplations will dictate to us the only wise and prudent answer to that taunting question, wherewith the mistress of all Churches hath been wont to assail those who abandoned her communion;—"Where did your Church lurk, in what cave of the earth slept she, for so many hundreds of years together, before the birth of Martin Luther?" The reply is, that she *lurked* beneath the folds of that garment of many colours, which the hand of superstition had woven and embellished for her, and wherewith she was fantastically encumbered and disguised. She *slept* in that cavern of enchantment, where costly odours and intoxicating fumes were floating around, to overpower her sense, and to suspend her faculties; till, at last, a voice was heard to cry, *Sleep no more*. And then she started up, like a

\* Every one must remember the protest of the Belgian clergy, in 1815, against religious toleration in the Netherlands; and the decree which some years since issued from the Vatican, declaring the dissemination of the Bible to be a pernicious and profane design. Every one, too, must be aware of the revival of the Jesuits, and of the zeal and activity of that order since its resurrection.

strong man refreshed, and shook herself from the dust of ages. Then did she cast aside the gorgeous "leadings," which oppressed her, and stood before the world, a sacred form of brightness and of purity.

It is a pernicious, though shallow artifice, to speak of Luther as the architect of a fabric which had any other foundation than that which was laid by the Almighty Master-builder. *Other foundation can no man lay.* "The Church of Christ, which was from the beginning, is, and continueth unto the end." The severe majesty of the structure had been disfigured and obscured by toyish and capricious outworks; and it had been girt about by turrets and battlements, which unhallowed ambition had made strong for itself, and which frowned upon the most precious liberties of man. These had, for ages past, been assailed by a vigorous though desultory warfare, and the attack had sometimes been powerful enough to warrant the hope, that their strength was not impregnable. But it was left for Martin Luther to go forth, in the strength of God, and to shake the greater part of them to ruins. When this was done, the Sanctuary was seen, in its grandeur and simplicity, resting on the imperishable rock; and men, once more, went up to the house of the Lord, to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The corruptions which had deformed and depraved the Christian faith, were of course, the gradual work of centuries. The foul accretion had stolen, imperceptibly, over its "smooth and wholesome body," till it seemed as if, *from the sole of the foot, even unto the head, there was no soundness in it.* As might, however, have been expected, in those retired and simple communities, which were furthest removed from the influences of the imperial hierarchy, the original form and brightness of Christianity were best guarded from the general pollution. There seems, for instance, to be a very strong presumption in favour of the belief, that the people of the valleys of Piedmont,

known by the name of the Vaudois or Waldenses, had preserved, from a very early period, a far purer faith than that which was professed by the great body of Christendom. The history of this sub-alpine protestantism, if we so may designate it, is, indeed, enveloped in such deep obscurity, that any attempt to investigate it would far exceed the limits or the design of the present work. We cannot, however, reflect without delight and wonder, upon one precious document, of unquestioned authenticity, which may be regarded as a confession of the faith of these people in the twelfth century. The relic in question is an ancient poem, called *La Nobla Leycon*, containing a metrical abridgment of the history and doctrine of the Old and New Testament, in the original language of the country, and evidently compiled for the purpose of perpetuating among the people the principles of sound belief. The exact date of this very curious and valuable monument, can scarcely be ascertained with any satisfactory precision. It has been concluded from the opening lines of it, that it was composed in the year 1100. The expressions, however, are of sufficient laxity to suit various periods within the twelfth century.\* But, however this question may be determined, it is still beyond all doubt that the essential doctrines and principles of our Reformation will be found in this religious formula, which concludes with an exposure of the gross "errors of the Papacy, the simony of the priesthood, masses and prayers for the dead, the impostures of absolution, and the abuses of the power of the keys."† From that time to the present, the same

\* "Brethren, give ear to a noble lesson.

One thousand and one hundred years are fully accomplished

Since it was written, '*we are in the last times.*' "

It would, therefore, appear, that the *terminus*, from which the 1100 years are to be reckoned, may be fixed either at the birth of Christ, which is often alluded to in the New Testament, as the commencement of "the last times," or final dispensation; or, at the date of any one of the various passages in the New Testament, in which the phrase—*the last times*—is found to occur.

† Leger, *Hist. des Eglises Vaudoises*.

opinions have been inflexibly maintained by these simple mountaineers; who have borne a perpetual and heroic testimony to the faith of their fathers, in the midst of the most merciless and appalling persecutions.

+ Whether the antiquity of the creed recorded in this composition, can be traced up to primitive or apostolic times, or whether it was the produce of the twelfth century, is a question attended with more perplexity than will easily be unravelled. It has been usual to refer its origin to Peter Waldo, or Waldensis, as he is sometimes denominated, an opulent merchant of Lyons, who is said to have been driven to separation from the Romish Church by the perusal of the Gospels and other books of Scripture, which he had employed a certain priest to translate into French. It may, however, be a point of reasonable controversy, whether this person was the teacher or the disciple of the Piedmontese Christians:—whether he did not rather derive from them the title of Waldensis, instead of marking them with his own appellation, as their original founder. In support of the former opinion it may fairly be alleged, that several Catholic writers, virulently hostile to these people, have spoken of *heresy* as of an indigenous growth among these Alpine wildernesses. The extent and the *antiquity* of the Waldensian perversion, is a subject of perpetual complaint with the papal authorities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. And if, to these considerations, we add the traditions uniformly prevalent among these uncorrupted shepherds; their own confident claims of immemorial purity, in faith and doctrine; their obscure and solitary abodes; and their remoteness from the scene of pontifical splendour and despotism; we shall find but little difficulty in the surmise, that the valleys of Piedmont may, from primitive, perhaps from apostolic times, have witnessed a more undefiled profession and practice of the Gospel, than can easily be found

among the more degenerate communities of Christian Europe. To myself, I confess, the probability appears to be, not that the Vaudois shook off the superstitions of the Romish Church, but rather that they had never put them on :\* and that when the hand of power was stretched forth to force the spotted garment upon them, they revolted at the oppression; and, at length, recorded their *protest* against it, in the form of that immortal lesson, which to this day may be regarded as their spiritual petition of right!

At the same time, I would wish to be understood as offering this view of the matter, not on the ground of positive proof, but only of strong presumption; a presumption which, perhaps, may be much less satisfactory to others than it is to myself. Neither is it to be disguised that (even if the Vaudois are to be regarded as protesting, from the earliest times, by their practice and their faith, against the dominion and perversion of the Romish Church,) there still may be a doubt whether their protest carries with it the full weight and authority which belongs to a legitimate branch of the Church, invested with the sanctity of apostolical succession. Their noble lesson itself, we must remember, contains no mention either of the forms of ordination, or of the gradations of sacerdotal rank and office. An ancient manuscript, indeed, they have, relating to ecclesiastical discipline, claiming, among the privileges which God has given to his people, the right to choose their *governors*, and their priests, in their several offices, "according to the diversity of the work, in the unity of Christ, and conformably to the apostolic example, —*For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest*

\* I cannot but agree with Mr. Gilly, that "it is much more likely that a race of mountaineers, secluded from the world, should have preserved the purity and simplicity of the primitive Church, than that they should suddenly become Scripture readers and reformers in the twelfth century, after having been overwhelmed in the darkness that prevailed in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries."—*Waldensian Researches*, p. 112.

as in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed :” and according to the same document, the ministers “having good testimonials, and being well approved of, are received with imposition of hands.”\* There is a vagueness and laxity about these expressions, which leaves a shade of doubt still hanging over the succession and perpetuation of the sacred order among them, and renders somewhat questionable their claim to the character of an Episcopal Church.† Still, it must be allowed, on all hands, that the existence of a retired community, living, from the earliest times, in the profession of opinions essentially Protestant, is a phenomenon in the highest degree interesting and important. If its existence could be fully established by proof, such a society might fairly be regarded as an image of what Christianity was, at least in principle and doctrine, before it was disfigured by the corruptions which crept over it, in other regions more exposed to the infection. And, in that case, the Vaudois might be regarded as ancient and most venerable witnesses of the truth, even though it might be too much to acknowledge them as decisive and overpowering authorities for it. It must, at all events, be most gratifying to find a community of Christians,

\* Gilly's Waldensian Researches, p. 142.

† That the Vaudois were supposed to have preserved the apostolical succession in the fifteenth century, appears, from the testimony of the venerable John Amos Comenius, the leader of the emigration of the persecuted Bohemian and Moravian Protestants from their own country into Poland, early in the seventeenth century, and afterwards, in 1632, consecrated bishop of the dispersed brethren. In his history of the Bohemian Church, he relates that, in 1450, the Bohemian separatists, in their anxiety to have their pastors ordained in regular succession from the apostles, sent three of their preachers to “a certain Stephen, bishop of the Vaudois ; and this Stephen, with others officiating, conferred the vocation and ordination upon the three pastors, by the imposition of hands.” That there were bishops in the Waldensian Church a century later, seems evident from their confession of faith presented to Francis the First, in 1544, in which there is the following article : “Nous tenons cecy pour resolu, parmi nous, que les Evêques et les pasteurs doivent estre irreprehensibles dans leur doctrine et leurs mœurs, &c. &c.” See Gilly's Mountains of Piedmont, p. 75. (1824.)

approximating more closely to our modern Protestantism, in proportion as they were removed from the influence and contact of the Romish hierarchy.

But, whatever may be their claims to immemorial antiquity, or unbroken apostolical succession, or perfect purity of doctrine,—there is one particular in which they stand unimpeached, even on the showing of their adversaries. The innocence of their lives is placed beyond all doubt, by the testimony of those very monkish writers, who execrate their rebellion against the power of the Church, and charge them with the presumption of preaching without a regular mission. The picture of their morals, given by Rayner, (himself originally an “heresiarch,” by his own avowal, but afterwards one of the bitterest persecutors of dissent) may of itself be regarded as absolutely conclusive. “They are steady and modest in their manners; they have no ostentation in their dress; they use neither rich nor splendid apparel; they decline commerce from their aversion to lies, oaths, and fraud, but live by the labour of their hands; they do not amass wealth, but are contented with necessities; they are chaste and temperate, especially those of Lyons; they do not frequent taverns, nor dances, nor other vanities; they refrain from anger; they are always working, learning, or teaching.” It is true that this testimony may be taken as embracing, generally, all those sectaries who were charged with a revolt from the dominant Church: but it is also true, that it has a more emphatic reference to the men of Lyons, and by that term this writer is usually understood to designate the Waldenses, considered by him as disciples of Peter Waldo, the celebrated reformer of that city.

What the “men of the valleys” were in Piedmont, the Albigenses may possibly have been in Languedoc, and the south of France; although it must be confessed that the name of these latter religionists has not been handed down to us with the same unsullied

honours, as that of their Alpine brethren. It has been confidently affirmed, that the creed of these people was tainted with the monstrous errors of the Manichæan heresy: and the charge has been supported by a large body of contemporary evidence; and, more particularly, by the recorded acts of the inquisition of Thoulouse. That the extravagant principles of this strange theory were partially dispersed among the multitude of sects, which at this time were beginning to disturb the slumbers of Romish orthodoxy, appears almost beyond dispute. But it seems, likewise, irresistibly clear, that, amidst the variety of error which is said to have chequered the motley surface of their belief, one peculiarity was common to them all; for without exception, they protested against the exorbitant wealth and intolerable despotism of the Papal hierarchy. It will easily be perceived how grievously the mixture of Gnostic or Manichæan error, in the multiform creeds of these people, would disqualify them for an effectual conflict against the abuses they presumed to denounce. Their doctrinal perversions would enable the defenders of the Catholic faith to proclaim, with sufficient plausibility, that the gainsayers of the Papal supremacy were likewise open adversaries to the primitive truth; that the traitors to the Pontiff were, also, little better than rebels against God; that they, who set up their own private judgment against the authority of St. Peter's chair, scrupled not to affirm a divided empire between the power of evil, and the Father of all goodness. To what precise extent these notions could justly be ascribed to the Albigenses, or the Cathari, or other reputed heretics of the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, it would, at this day, be extremely difficult to decide; but it can scarcely be doubted, that they retained a sufficient amount of erroneous doctrine, to furnish their enemies with very formidable arms against them. In another, and much more creditable respect, however, they



undoubtedly bore a very near resemblance to their Asiatic predecessors. The greater part of the original Manichæans are represented to us, with all their extravagances, as a class of harmless mystics, or austere enthusiasts; and such undoubtedly were a very large portion among their European successors, in subsequent ages, by whatever multitude of names they may have been consigned to public execration by their persecutors.

A.D. 1208. But, let the innocency of their lives be what it might, what would it be, but a corslet of gossamer, against the blade and the firebrand of the military adventurer, even when going forth under the banners of a religious crusade? Had the piety and devotion of the misbelievers been such as almost to purify the age in which they lived, so long as the taint of a rebellious heresy was upon them, they would, in that period, have scarcely been deemed worthy to exist. It was at the beginning of the twelfth century that the hounds of persecution were let loose against them; and before the end of the same century, the very name of the Albigenses had well nigh perished from the face of the earth. Innocent the Third was the Holy Father whose voice summoned his faithful children to the work of extermination; and Simon de Montfort was named the leader of the host; "a man like Cromwell, whose intrepidity, hypocrisy, and ambition, marked him for the hero of a holy war."\* And then the deluge of havoc burst forth upon the plains of Languedoc. The warriors of the Cross achieved unheard-of miracles of courage and of butchery. "The land before them was as the garden of Eden; behind them it was a desolate wilderness." The flame and the steel swept away the inhabitants and their dwellings, "*from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.*" Nay, even the faithful Catholics themselves were

\* Hallam's Middle Ages, c. i.

not safe from the blind fury of the tempest; for, in the midst of the work of ruin, a voice was once heard to cry out, "*Let all be slain—the Lord will know his own!*"\* The tide of desolation held on its course, till the ancient and heroic house of Thoulouse fell before it, so that *its place knew it no more*. And thus were the direst furies of man's corrupt heart sent forth for the chastisement and extirpation of impiety! Thus was the earth shaken and trampled by the hoof of demoniac frenzy, and all in wild pursuit of a phantom of spiritual rebellion, which at the worst, was guiltless of blood, and which never inflicted a wound on the rights of humanity, or on the peace of the world!

It has been stated above, that the persecution of these unhappy sectaries was inflamed by the cry, which charged them with the abominations of the Manichæan heresy. It will, therefore, be proper briefly to advert to the introduction of this ingredient into the Christianity of Europe. In the middle of the seventh century, we are told, there arose in the neighbourhood of Samosata, a sect of Christians, known, for whatever cause, by the name of Paulicians. Their origin is usually ascribed to the following circumstance. A Christian deacon, on his return from captivity in Syria, then in possession of the Mussulmans, was hospitably received by one Constantine, an obscure member of the Greek Church. He received from the gratitude of his guest a copy of the Greek Testament, which had then been sealed up by the Eastern Church from popular inspection. The perusal of this sacred volume converted Constantine into a zealous and indefatigable Reformer. His labours were rewarded by the fidelity of a numerous body of followers, collected partly from the Catholics, and partly, it is said, from the remnants of the Gnos-

\* This was, actually, the cry of a Cistercian monk, at the storming of Bezerres, where heretics were slaughtered by thousands, and Catholics among them!

tics and Manichean sects. The creed of the Paulicians, (for such was the title by which they soon were designated,) rejected many of the superstitions which then deformed the Catholic belief and worship; but this merit, if we are to believe their adversaries, was overpowered by their adoption of opinions, which violated the first principles of natural and revealed religion. They attempted to combine the doctrines of Zoroaster with those of Christ. They admitted the existence of two adverse powers, the conflicting authors of good and evil. The New Testament they ascribed to the Father of Mercies, while they despised and abhorred the Old, as a collection of absurd and impious fables; and attributed them to the folly of men, or to the malice of demons. Their detestation of images, at last, exposed them to the fury of the Empress Theodora. Her reign was rendered *illustrious* by the sacrifice of the Paulicians; of whom one hundred thousand are said to have perished "by the sword, the gibbet, and the flames." Oppression, in time, converted the inflexible heretics into desperate rebels. After the usual vicissitudes of heroic suffering and sanguinary vengeance, the course of events transplanted multitudes of them from Armenia to Thrace, from Thrace to Italy and France; and with them, the habit of perpetual reference to the Law and the Testimony. Whatever may have been their doctrinal aberrations, they still acknowledged Scripture as the sole foundation of belief; and they who deny that any remains of spiritual independence were then to be found in Europe, ascribe to these persecuted exiles, the accidental merit of scattering over the West, together with the tares of the Oriental heresy, the good seed of evangelical reformation.

Neither creeds, nor confessions, nor apologies, now remain, which might enable us to judge of the degree, in which the Paulicians were infected with the Manichean perversion. The most express testimony on the subject is that of Petrus Siculus, who lived

towards the end of the ninth century, and who had resided, for some time, as ambassador among the heretics. And yet, in spite of his opportunities of informing himself, the account he gives of their belief is such, as the most liberal exercise of ingenuity and candour can scarcely reduce to any semblance of consistency: for he tells us, on the one hand, that they most readily and earnestly anathematized the heresiarch Manes, and on the other, that they still retained several of his most revolting absurdities. They affirmed, for instance, the existence of a benevolent, and a malignant Deity; they rejected the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and they denied altogether the authority of the Old Testament. These prodigies of misbelief, if we are to give implicit credence to the statements of monkish annalists and inquisitors, they imported with them into Europe; where they and their disciples became conspicuously detestable under the various titles of Catharists, Picards, Paterins, and, more especially, of Albigenses.

Even if these hostile representations were to be admitted, they would bring before us nothing but what the usual course of persecution might easily account for. The spirit of intolerance had been on the wing for ages. It had been sweeping all-dissent and resistance from the earth. And, while the tempest was abroad, it was probable enough that the various forms of belief, whether sound or visionary, which were at all opposed to the established system of ecclesiastical power, would be driven to the same hiding-places for shelter against its fury. And, in that case, whenever the scriptural verity ventured forth again into the world, it could not be very surprising, if, together with it, there should emerge the apparitions of the Arian or Manichæan heresies. But, however this may be, I cannot, without extreme difficulty, reconcile myself to the hypothesis, which ascribes wholly to this influx of Asiatic separatists, the revival of a spirit of inquiry in Europe. My

doubts respecting this question, are not suggested by a disdainful reluctance to acknowledge, that an impulse so glorious might, perchance, be communicated by a sect, originating in some obscure corner of the East; for the hand of Providence can, at all times, impart an irresistible momentum to the lightest grains and atoms. Neither should we be deterred from the reception of this hypothesis, by the fear of that scornful rebuke, wherewith it may be supposed to arm the Papacy against us. "The rebellion," she may say, "which shook to pieces the unity of the Church, and murdered the quiet of mankind, was first kindled by the strange fire of an accursed heresy. The flame which has gone before you, on your way to revolution, never descended from heaven. It came up from the place below; and, as might be expected, ruin and havoc were in its path." For a fit reply to such revilings, none can be at a loss, who recollect that there is One, who can over-rule even the mightiest resources of evil, and compel them to work together for the accomplishment of his purposes. The grand objection to this solution is, in my humble judgment, derived from its extreme improbability. It is surely very difficult to persuade ourselves, that the sparks of opposition were then so entirely trodden out, throughout all Christendom, but that, in many an obscure retreat, they must still have remained in readiness to fly up in the face of the power that was trampling on them. It is impossible to look into the annals of the Church, without perceiving that,—although the vices, and the fears, and the necessities of the world, were gradually enlisted under the banner of superstition,—yet, on the other hand, the natural pride and independence of mankind, even where holier motives might be wanting, were perpetually opposing a resolute front against the usurpation. After the struggle of a thousand years, the work of conquest seemed to be well nigh complete; and the West was sleeping, to all appearance, the deep

sleep of obedience and conformity. But, still, it is scarcely credible, that the elements of resistance should have been utterly suppressed, or that Europe contained within herself no principle of deliverance or renovation. This principle, indeed, may very possibly have been awakened into earlier activity, by the infusion of a fervid element from another region. The Paulicians, recent from the smart, or the recollection, of inhuman persecution, may have spread throughout the provinces, to which they migrated, a fiercer impatience of all spiritual control. It may be highly probable that they threw into more turbulent combination the ingredients which they found still existing in their adopted country. But to allow this, is very different from confessing ourselves debtors to them for our own emancipation, or investing them with the chief honours due to apostles of religious purity.\*

It would be useless to load these pages with the uncouth names of that boundless variety of sects, which began to swarm throughout Christendom at the period of these commotions, and which give somewhat of a grotesque appearance to the ecclesiastical history of the darker ages; a list to which Popery is eternally pointing, as a record of the evils which spring from a violation of her sacred unity, and heaven-descended power. To enumerate them would, probably, be to reckon up, not so much the essential varieties of religious sentiment, as the varieties of individual temperament, and the peculiarities of im-

\* On the perplexed and difficult questions, relating to the Vaudois, the Albigenses, and the Paulicians, the reader may consult the following works: Leger, *Histoire des Eglises Vaudoises*; Allix, *Remarks on the Ecclesiastical History of the Churches of Piedmont*; Turner's *History of England*, part iv. c. ii.; Hallam's *Middle Ages*, part ii. c. ix.; Gilly's *Excursion to the Mountains of Piedmont*, (1824,) and *Waldensian Researches* (1831); Peyran's *Historical Defence of the Waldenses*, (1829); Gibbon's fifty-fourth chapter, on the Paulicians; M'Crie on the Reformation in Italy, and in Spain. In these he will either find the necessary information; or, at least, directions to the authorities in which the truth may be sought for.

dividual character. These heresies, if heresies we are to call them, are, for the most part, distinguishable from each other only upon paper. Their differences (so far as we can discern) are not even such as exist between various races of mankind. They may rather be compared to those varieties, which are observable between the figures and the countenances of men of the same race. In one particular, however, as we have already observed, the resemblance between them all is singularly striking, namely, in their aspect of hatred and defiance towards the papal domination. This it was that, in the eyes of Rome, gave to their physiognomy that expression of surpassing ugliness, in which all other deformities were lost. Ridicule and sarcasm she could patiently endure, just as statesmen are indifferent about lampoons and caricatures, so long as they feel their power to be substantial and secure. Her knowledge of human nature was sufficient to assure her, that the indignation is harmless, which can freely discharge itself in explosions of ingenuity and humour. With still more profound composure did she regard the sublimest aspirations of unearthly or mystic piety, which occasionally were ascending to heaven from her sacred solitudes. The spirit which breathed in these retirements was often, indeed, essentially at variance with the worldly and ambitious temper that presided in her councils, and directed the execution of her designs; but then, it was embodied in works sealed up against the general view, and open only to the eye of self-denying and contemplative men: it therefore offered no public rebuke to her schemes of secular aggrandizement and dominion. The shafts of derision were, to her, like the efforts of archery against battlements of granite: the purest meditations of scriptural devotion harmed her no more than clouds of incense, rising in the midst of those earthly odours, which were constantly steaming from her altars. Nay, more than this,—she could

listen unmoved to the keenest words of remonstrance and reproof from the mouth of her own sons, provided that they challenged not her pre-eminence and majesty.\* But when once the voice of revolt was lifted up, strengthened, as it was, by an incessant appeal to the *Word of God*, she began to tremble for the stability of her rule. She saw that a power was abroad, which, if not mercilessly crushed, might batter to pieces, or undermine, the fabric of her dominion: and she straightway addressed herself to the work of vengeance with all the remorseless ferocity of terror and of pride. Some speculators on her history there are, who, in the contemplation of her enormities, have partially consoled themselves with the reflection, that execrable as they were, they had, at least, the effect of suppressing a premature eruption of the spirit of liberty, which might have thrown the social system into desperate confusion, and retarded the improvement of the human race. And it can scarcely be questioned, that much danger was to be apprehended to the best interests of man, from the extravagant and ignorant fanaticism which sometimes mixed itself with the movements of those gloomy times. It requires, however, an unusual hardihood of mind to commit one's self to such deep speculation on the eventual usefulness of crime. I can scarcely venture to plunge into the crater of such awful and mysterious thoughts. We should rather

\* Witness the sermon delivered by Nicolas Oram, before the pope Urban, in 1364, in which the preacher loudly and intrepidly denounces the vices and abuses of the Papacy, and calls for their correction, in order that God's mercy may return to the Church, and that her rebellious adversaries may be disarmed. "I think verily," he says, "that these many years there have not been so many and so despitiful hearts, and evil-willers, stout, and of such a rebellious heart against the Church of God, as be now-a-days. Neither be they lacking, that would do all they can against it, and lovers of new-fangleness; whose hearts the Lord haply will turn, that they shall not hate his people, and work deceit against his servants; I mean against priests, whom they have now in little or no reputation at all, albeit many yet there be, through God's grace, good and godly. But as yet, the fury of the Lord is not turned away, but still his hand is stretched out. And, unless ye be converted, he hath bent his bow and prepared it ready."—Fox, p. 477.



be disposed to content ourselves with a general, but yet a confident persuasion, that all these frightful outbreakings of passion have wrought together, after some inscrutable manner, for the welfare of man, and for the glory and prosperity of the Church of God.

To turn from speculations to facts. It appears beyond all doubt, that the noise of many waters begun, in those ages, to be heard in Catholic Christendom. The streams were then bursting forth from the subterraneous course, to which they had long been forcibly confined, and the whole face of society was, in various directions, intersected by their channels. They continued gradually to combine their might; till, at last, they united into one headlong torrent, which rolled onward, and bore down before it the bulwarks, whose strength and solidity had been the work of centuries. It remains for us to observe the tributary force, wherewith the intellect and the heart of England swelled this salutary inundation.

## INTRODUCTION.

## CHAPTER II.

*Flow of Christianity in England, to the middle of the fourteenth century.*

IN surveying the annals of Christianity in this country, it will, for all substantial purposes, be sufficient to begin with the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon Church. By whom the light of the Gospel was originally kindled in our land, it is now impossible to ascertain. That it shone in our *dark and cruel places* at a very early period, we learn from the voice of tradition; and Glastonbury would seem to be the spot which is best entitled to the honour of raising up this beacon flame, for the guidance of our barbarous ancestors. Its intensity, however, was by no means sufficient to overpower and extinguish the hideous aboriginal superstitions of the country, or the more civilized paganism of its Roman conquerors. The classic mythology, indeed, gradually waned away, in Britain, together with the influence of her imperial protectors. But there is reason to believe that, as the Roman power decayed, the Druidical heathenism began to resume its strength, and to disfigure Christianity, where it could not actually destroy it. Of these vicissitudes, however, no authentic history is now to be found. Of legendary and portentous hagiology, there is, indeed, abundance. But beyond this, we have no other records of the early British Church.

The Saxon invasion brought with it the Tartarie idolatry of the North, The grim superstition of the

Druids, the obsolete paganism of Rome, and the venerable forms of Christianity,—all were swept away before it. They retired, together with the Genius of British independence, to impenetrable retreats and mountain solitudes, and left the land as an heritage to the spirit of Odin: so that, for considerably upwards of a century, the Gospel was lost to the kingdoms of the heptarchy. The blessing was restored by the zeal of Gregory the Great. The well-known accident which impelled him to the pious enterprise, is illustrative, at once, of the benignity of his heart, and the quaintness of his understanding. Before his elevation to the pontificate, he had seen a number of comely Saxon youths in the slave-market at Rome. Being struck with their appearance, and hearing that they were called *Angles*,—*Angels*, he exclaimed, they truly are, and ought to be joined to the angelic company. On being told that they came from the province of Deira—Aye, *de ira*, indeed, said he; *from the wrath* of God they must be plucked, and brought unto the grace of Christ. But his passion for quibbling was still unsatisfied. When he learned that *Ælla* was the name of their king,—Alleluiah! he instantly cried out; Alleluiahs must be chanted by them in the dominions of their sovereign. The design, which was expressed by all this solemn trifling, never dropped from his mind; and when he was advanced to the throne of St. Peter, he dispatched forty monks to England, for the vigorous execution of it. Augustine was the leader of this venerable mission; and most auspiciously for the enterprise, the Queen of Ethelbert, then King of Kent, was a Frankish princess, and passionately devoted to the Christian faith. Her influence accelerated the conversion of her semi-barbarian husband; and, eventually conferred upon her adopted country the blessings of a pure and humanizing religion.

Nothing can well be more interesting or impressive than the picture which has been left us of the

opening of this missionary labour. It was in the year 600 that Ethelbert was apprized of the arrival in his dominions of certain strangers, habited in a foreign garb, and practising several unusual and mysterious ceremonies. Their object, as they stated, was to be admitted to the presence of the king, in order that they might communicate to him, and to his people, tidings of measureless importance to their everlasting welfare. The sacred embassy was received by him in the Isle of Thanet. He was surrounded by his nobles, and seated in the open air. He imagined, it would seem, conformably to an ancient superstitious notion, that the enchantments which he, at first, apprehended from these awful persons, would be less formidable under the canopy of heaven, than within the walls of a building made with hands. The ministers of peace and sanctity approached in procession, bearing a silver crucifix, and a figure of the Saviour painted upon a banner, and chanting the solemn Litany of the Church. They then stated to him the object of their mission: and, having received from him a prudent, but favourable reply, were permitted to fix their residence at Canterbury, and to commence at once the labours of conversion. And thus, at the opening of the seventh century, were laid the foundations of the Anglo-Saxon Church.

Under the protection of this powerful prince, the new religion advanced with a prosperous and rapid course. The rude heathenism of the Saxons gave way, in all directions, before it. Even the idolatrous priesthood in many instances, set the example of conversion; and it is related, that on the first preaching of the Gospel in Northumberland, the Saxon pontiff himself mounted a horse—which, to one of his order, was a dire abomination—and burst into the consecrated precinct, where with his own hand, he hewed in pieces the idol, to whose service his former life had been devoted.

It would be foreign to the design of this work to trace minutely the progress of Christianity among our unlettered and half-savage ancestors. It may be sufficient to observe, that the chief obstructions it had to encounter, were rather from the coarse and licentious habits of the people, than from the stubbornness of the ancient superstitions. Surrounded by the ruins of Roman magnificence, they dwelt in hovels of plastered wicker-work, intent on nothing but the excitements of the chase, or the toils of military exercise. Their whole system of life, in short, at the period of their call to the profession of the Gospel, appears to have been not many degrees removed from a state of abject barbarism. That the religion of the Cross was embraced by them with fervid zeal and true simplicity of spirit, may be reasonably concluded from the change which gradually stole over the rugged features of society, when once it was exposed to these new and blessed influences. It is true that the contest between passion and principle among them, continued, for a long time, obstinate and violent. As might be expected, in that twilight of civility, their history often exemplifies, in a remarkable degree, the wild precipitation with which untutored minds can rush from one extremity to its furthest opposite. The lives of the same individuals frequently exhibited the darkest atrocities, followed by the almost frantic self-infliction; prodigies of rapine succeeded by an utter renunciation of the world; licentious and brutal violence ending in vows of perpetual chastity. There was no vice so monstrous as to startle them in their career of self-indulgence; no expiation severe enough to deter them, when once the season of repentance had arrived. By degrees, however, the violence of the conflict was moderated, under the gentle arbitration of Christianity. A milder spirit gradually insinuated itself into the social mass; till, at last, the monastic system, with many of its evils, but with all its benefits,

obtained a surprising predominance throughout the realm, and powerfully advanced the work of civilization. England, in fact, became, by degrees, almost a land of monasteries; and kings were not ashamed to descend from the seat of dominion to the retirements of religious contemplation. The effect of this system was, to soften the asperities of savage life, to tame the passionate devotion to war and bloodshed, and to prepare the way for the formation of petty monarchies into one powerful and solid empire.

The spirit and energy of the Saxon Church was long kept up by its continued intercourse with Rome. The meager literature of the country was invigorated and enriched by the learning and the talent of a long series of foreign prelates, among whom, the name of Theodorus, the seventh Archbishop of Canterbury, stands nobly conspicuous. By birth he was a Greek; and by him the knowledge of his own magnificent language was introduced into this country. The northern provinces, indeed, although they maintained their intercourse with Italy, derived moral and intellectual improvement from sources peculiar to themselves. The names of Iona and of Lindisfarn will be illustrious, to the end of time, as sanctuaries of learning and of piety. The one was a solitary and barren rock in the Western Ocean; the other an obscure island at the mouth of Tees. And yet, from these insignificant spots it was, that the lights of literature and religion were seen to issue forth into the thick darkness which enveloped the northern regions of our empire. Such was the ardour of study, and such the holy rigour of discipline, which distinguished the monks of Iona, that their habitation was honoured as an island of saints, and their episcopal jurisdiction acknowledged over all the northern parts of Britain and of Ireland. Of Lindisfarn, what more need be said, than that it fostered the virtues and the industry of the venerable Bede, and was the scene of his vast and immortal labours? It was, indeed, unfortunate

that "the infancy of English learning was supported by the dotage of the Roman;"\* but still, the establishment of an institution such as Lindisfarn, and the appearance of a teacher such as Bede, in a country which, half a century before, was without an alphabet, are circumstances which can scarcely be paralled in the history of man.

But at the time when England was struggling, with all the energy of heart and hope, to emerge from the Serbonian bog of ignorance and barbarism, she was thrust back again into its depths by the hand of a ferocious adversary. In the hour of her repose the Philistines were upon her. A deluge of sanguinary heathenism burst over her from the North: and she began to sink once more into the abyss of degradation and of misery. Her deliverance was the work of one man. On the name of Alfred history has lavished all her resources of praise. Like the fabled Hercules of old, in him have centered the collective honours of institutions and achievements, the glory of which a more perfect knowledge of the times might, possibly, enable us to distribute with greater equity and credibility. But, after every reservation, enough would, doubtless, be left, to stamp him as a miracle of wisdom, energy, and patriotism; a benefactor such as Providence, in its mercy, sometimes raises up to rescue nations from despair. The Danes had torn his kingdom to fragments. He left it, at his death, in a state of integrity. In the eye of an historian of the Church, his name is eternally memorable, for the faithfulness with which he discharged the first of all those paternal duties, for which the *powers that be are ordained of God*. He laboured, both in his own person, and by munificence of encouragement and patronage, to restore and to protect the fallen religion of his country. Religion seems, in truth to have been the pillar of flame which incessantly

directed and cheered him, throughout *the greatness of his way*. He commanded personally in fifty-four pitched battles—he was the creator of the navy of Britain—he was the protector of her commerce—he was, himself, the life and soul of her public justice—he has been thought, by some, to merit the title of Founder of her constitution—he was the good genius of her literature and arts—and, lastly, he most eminently deserves the name of Nursing Father of her Church. A third portion of his time was given up to the toils of study, and the exercises of piety. He translated works of devotion—he commenced a version of the Psalms—and his whole life appears to have been an example of the power of Christianity to take captive the highest faculties and noblest affections of man. And the whole of these wonders is rendered more overpowering by the circumstance, that they were achieved under the almost incessant pressure of severe bodily anguish. His life was one perpetual disease, and was terminated at the age of fifty-two—after having crowded within its limits such prodigies of useful exertion, as would seem to have demanded the days of an ancient patriarch, and the iron vigour of a Charlemagne.

Sorely would it have grieved the heart of this illustrious man, to look upon the tempest which soon began to lower over the country he had saved, and which burst forth, in the following century, with desolating fury. The evil angel, which first let loose the storm, was one, whom the Romish calendar reckons among its holy ones. The name of Dunstan is popularly known among us by that extremely grotesque conflict, in which he is supposed to have extorted howls of anguish from the enemy of mankind. Alas! well would it have been for England if he had been contented with the honours of this triumph. But he was a foul and hideous incarnation of the same spirit, which in an age somewhat less barbarous, animated another renowned saint, the



celebrated Thomas of Canterbury. In order to comprehend and estimate the distractions he inflicted upon this kingdom, it will be necessary to pause for a moment, and to consider the condition of the Saxon Church at the decease of Alfred, and in the succeeding age.

The ecclesiastical discipline, which had been established by Augustine, was, of course, Episcopal, and the dioceses were, respectively, coextensive with the kingdoms of the Heptarchy. Cathedrals and monasteries were built and endowed by the pious munificence of kings and nobles; but parochial divisions were as yet unknown. Among the earliest sources of maintenance for the Church, may be numbered the institution of tythes. This may be stated simply as a *fact*, without drawing us into controversy as to the precise nature and force of the obligation to their payment. The distribution of this fund was left to the bishop, and his brother presbyters; and was destined to the fourfold purpose of supporting the clergy, —repairing the church,—relieving the poor,—and providing hospitable entertainment for the pilgrim or the traveller.

At first, the religious instruction of every vicinity was administered by the perpetual missionary labours of the clergy attached to the cathedrals, under the direction and control of the bishop. To remedy the precarious nature of this supply, chapels and oratories were erected in every diocese; and, in time, the necessity of field worship was still more extensively superseded, by the foundation of parochial churches. This important change was not the effect of any sudden revolution: it was the gradual work of time; and was either dictated by the piety, or suggested by the convenience, of the landed proprietors, who were naturally desirous of the constant residence of a minister, to instruct their vassals in a religion which taught them the duties of industry and contentment. One consequence of it was, that, by an agreement

with the bishops and their clergy, the endowment of tythes was transferred to the fixed place of worship, and vested solely in the local minister; while the patronage of each church remained with the founder, and his representatives. It was a condition invariably attached to this arrangement, that a house should be provided for the incumbent, together with a suitable allotment of glebe land: and, in order that the duties of hospitality might be more effectually performed, the residence of the minister was usually fixed either by the way-side, or near the limits of some extensive common.

The whole scheme of our ecclesiastical polity, in those ages, was framed and consolidated by the energy and the intelligence of Archbishop Theodore; who established a uniformity of discipline and government throughout all the churches, under the primacy of Canterbury. The exertions of this eminent and enlightened prelate, in behalf of literature, have already been honourably mentioned. His spirit seemed, for a time, to animate the clerical order. Their intellectual attainments were, for the age, respectable, and their attention to their sacred duties almost exemplary. But their *first works* were, unhappily, succeeded by a period of deplorable degeneracy; and the decline of piety and learning was frightfully hastened by the ruinous ferocity of the Danes. The monastic establishments were destroyed by these ignorant and brutal savages; and a headlong relapse towards barbarism was the natural effect of their fury. All that could be accomplished by man, was done by Alfred for the restoration of letters and religion. But the hopelessness of the task may be estimated by the fact that, at his accession to the throne, a single priest was not to be found south of the Thames with Latin enough to understand the daily services which he muttered, and that the religious establishments throughout the land were wholly broken up. And when the monastic system began

to revive, many years after his death, its resurrection was attended with convulsions that rent the kingdom to pieces, and helped to make it once more an easy prey to its ever watchful and sanguinary assailants.

The spirit that presided over these commotions, was Dunstan; a man who has done more than, perhaps, any other individual that can be mentioned, to inflict upon mankind the curse of a suspicion, that priestcraft and religion are one. The history of superstition can scarcely present another name so infamous for barefaced abuse of vulgar credulity, and for a prodigal application of the grossest machinery of imposture. His progress from his cell at Glastonbury to the primacy of England is one perpetual series of atrocity and fraud. His grand object was to erect the Benedictine order on the ruins of the national Church and to consign to monks the whole spiritual government of the realm. His commanding genius was well suited to this pernicious enterprise; and the success of his machinations was calamitous and astounding. It forms altogether a monument of unscrupulous ambition, such as might have appeared extravagant and monstrous, even in the visions of romance. That its proportions, however, have *not* been exaggerated, we may collect from the circumstance, that his biography has been delivered to us, not by calumnious adversaries, but by admiring, and partly by contemporary, chroniclers; and the gratitude of Rome has preserved his name to this day on her register of canonized saints.

But the works even of this architect of evil were not destined to last. Unhappily, however, the Danes were the instruments employed for their destruction. When they renewed their incursions, the religious establishments as usual, fell before their stupid ferocity, and the plague of ignorance and depravity once more settled upon the land. The barbarians, indeed, conformed to the religion which they found; but their very conformity was marked with insolence

and profaneness. The clergy, whom Dunstan would have made the autocrats of the country, were converted almost into its menial slaves. They were doomed to drain off the cup of humiliation, even to its bitterest dregs : for the savages, who ruled them, frequently compelled them to celebrate the services of the altar, not only in their private houses, but in the very chambers where their wives, or their concubines, were reposing by their sides ! In short, the wild deluge of barbarism, wickedness and tyranny, was rising so rapidly, that, according to all human judgment, nothing but some mighty revolution could have arrested the progress of the flood ; and the Norman Conquest may reasonably be regarded as a monument at once of the goodness and the severity of God.

Bowed down, however, as they were by the tyranny of their late masters, the clergy still retained sufficient spirit to embarrass and provoke the Conqueror by their inflexible opposition to his government. The only effect of their resistance was the expulsion of the native ecclesiastics from their dignities, and the introduction of foreigners in their place. Of these the most illustrious was Lanfranc, who reluctantly accepted the primacy of England. By birth he was an Italian, and he brought with him to his office the most eminent attainments which Italy could supply. He combined in his own person all the best qualities, and some few of the worst, which could distinguish a churchman of the eleventh century. He was the restorer and the patron of letters, and was altogether admirable for his charity and munificence, and for the high-minded integrity of his administration. On the other hand, he was ardently devoted to the supremacy of Rome ; he laboured urgently to inflict celibacy upon the clergy ; he was a vehement advocate for the doctrine of the corporeal presence in the sacrament, a dogma scarcely heard of in the Anglo-Saxon Church : and lastly, he was by no means scrupulous in the use of that machinery

by which superstition loves to maintain its ascendancy. His mind, however, lofty as it was, was not powerful enough to "rebuke the genius" of his master.—The resolute and arbitrary temper of the Conqueror enabled him to stand erect even before the mighty spirit of Hildebrand himself, and to encounter, with a peremptory refusal, the demand of the Pontiff, that the monarch of England should do fealty for his kingdom to the see of Rome. It will, therefore, scarcely be surprising, if Lanfranc found himself no match for the imperious disposition of his sovereign. Such was his weariness and dejection, under the difficulties which perpetually assailed him, that at last, he complained of his office as a burden too heavy for him to bear, and actually besought the Pope to relieve him from its oppression.

The gigantic scheme of Gregory VII. for erecting the chair of St. Peter into the throne of Christendom, and making Rome once more the mistress of the world, is sufficiently recorded in the annals of Europe. The march of usurpation was, for a time, diverted from this country, by the inflexible sternness and vigour of the Conqueror, the reckless obstinacy of Rufus,\* and the intelligent firmness of Henry Beau-

\* We may form some judgment of the stubbornness and hardihood of Rufus, from the following *gravamina* of Archbishop Anselm, addressed by him to the Pope: "I see in England many evils whose correction belongeth to me, and which I could neither amend, nor suffer without my own fault. The King desireth of me that I should consent to his pleasures, which were against the law and will of God. For he would not have the Pope received nor appealed to in England, without his commandment: neither that I should send a letter unto him, or receive any from him, or that I should obey his decrees. He suffered not a council to be kept in his realm now these thirteen years, since he was king. In all these things, and such like, if I asked any counsel, all my suffragan bishops of his realm denied to give me any counsel, but according to the king's pleasure. After that I saw these and such other things, that are done against the will and law of God, I asked a license of him to go to Rome, unto the see apostolical, that I might there take counsel for my soul, and for the office committed unto me. The king said that I offended against him for the only asking of license; and propounded to me, that I should either make amends to him for the same, as a trespass, (assuring him never to ask his license any more to appeal to the Pope at any time hereafter,) or else that I should quickly depart out of his land. Wherefore, choosing rather to go out of the land than

clerc. In the mean time, humanity and literature, which had been revived by the influence of Lanfranc, and of Anselm his successor in the primacy, were prosperously expanding themselves beyond the walls of monasteries, and gradually smoothing down the shaggy barbarism of the age. But then came that tornado of desolation, the reign of Stephen, which severely damaged the mounds and bulwarks raised by his predecessors against the tide of encroachment, and left the first of the Plantagenets perilously exposed to its assault. The spirit of that active, but restless and irritable prince, was ill-fitted for a conflict with the self-possessed and inflexible genius of Becket. The subject of controversy between them was, the total immunity of ecclesiastics from secular jurisdiction; a portentous privilege, with which the course of events, and the necessities of the times, had gradually invested them. The dispute, however, at last, virtually resolved itself into the question, whether or not the power of the sceptre should bow down before that of the crozier, and the authority of the State be absorbed in that of the Church. The conflict was one which demanded, on the part of the sovereign, an adamantine solidity of character, like that of the first William, instead of the fitful impatience, and gusty passion, which unhappily distinguished his descendant. None but a mind of extraordinary strength and grandeur could form a fit antagonist for the saint of Canterbury. The struggle

agree to so wicked a thing, I came to Rome, as you know, and declared the whole matter to the Lord Pope. The king, by and by, (as soon as I went out of England,) invaded the whole archbishopric, and turned it to his own use; taxing the monks only with bare meat, drink, and cloth. The king, being warned and desired of the Lord Pope to amend this, contemned the same, and yet continueth in his purpose still. And now is the third year, since I came thus out of England, and more. Some men, not understanding, demand why I did not excommunicate the king. But the wiser sort, and such as have understanding, counsel me that I do not this thing, because it belongeth not unto me, both to complain and punish. To conclude I was forewarned by my friends that are under the king, that mine excommunication (if it should be done) would be laughed to scorn and despised."—Fox. p. 211.

would have tasked, to the utmost, the energies of the Conqueror himself; and even, with him, its issue might have been doubtful. The termination of it, in the case of Henry is well known. It brought him, an abject and naked penitent, to the tomb of the intrepid martyr, and it left the public mind in slavish prostration before the throne of the viceregent of God,

From this time the grasp of the Papal power became continually closer; and the next century beheld a king of England laying his crown at the feet of the pontifical minister, and binding his realm to the payment of an ignominious tribute. The distractions which followed, contributed, on the whole, to augment the strength, and to swell the arrogance, of the Papal despotism; for, at each vicissitude of the conflict, the appeal was addressed to his tribunal, and, of course, helped to confirm the belief, that the chair of St. Peter was the supreme seat of justice and authority on earth.

The reign of John, and that of Henry the Third, are marked by the indelible infamy of the crusade against the Albigenses, commanded, as we have seen, by our countryman Simon de Montfort. Bigotry and rapine were the furies which prompted this accursed enterprise: and "it differed in nothing, but in name, from the ferocious expeditions of the Northman votaries of Thor and Odin."\* By the almost total extirpation of the heretics, the fabric of the Papal dominion was to all appearance immovably consolidated. But though their destruction seemed to be complete, many a bleeding remnant of them was dispersed over Europe, to spread in all directions, perhaps the light of a purer faith, but, certainly, a sentiment of unconquerable hatred against the power of Rome; so that it might almost be said of this prodigy of wickedness, that it was the day-star of the Reformation, although it rose out of the deep

\* Turner, Hist. England.

with an aspect of blood. There seems to be no doubt that the sympathy excited by the sufferings of these people had extended to this country. Most certain it is, that a spirit of indignant resistance to the Catholic hierarchy began to manifest itself in England about the period of these hateful massacres. From that time the voice of Parliament began to be frequently heard, in loud remonstrance against the rapacity and insolence of the Pontiff; and the cry was sometimes deepened by murmurs of discontent from the English Clergy themselves, who began to feel impatient under the exactions of their master. There was a heaving and a swell upon the surface of things, portending commotions at which Rome might have trembled, had she not *glorified herself*, in her infatuation, *and said in her heart, I sit as a Queen, and shall see no sorrow*. Even the genius of the scholastic philosophy had secretly helped to inflame the spirit of insurrection. For though it was wretchedly adapted to the purpose of aiding the mind in the discovery of truth, its tendency, unquestionably was, at least, to give activity and independence to the intellect, and to engage it in speculations exceedingly incommensurable to irresponsible power and infallible authority. The agitations produced by these various causes will be occasionally adverted to in the following narrative. In the meantime, it would be unpardonable in a biographer of Wiclif to abstain from reminding the present age, of one in whom the spirit of religious freedom and integrity manifested itself with an energy, which was the glory of his age, and which fully entitles him to be regarded as the predecessor of our Reformer. The person I allude to, is Grostete, the ever memorable Bishop of Lincoln.

It appears that this eminent man was master of all the learning and science which was then to be had, confused and inaccurate as it was. His attainments were such as to confer upon him, for a time, the dangerous renown of a magician, and, ultimately,



to elevate him to the see of Lincoln. He was advanced to this dignity in 1235, when he was about fifty years of age; and even at that mature period of his life he seems to have been an ardent admirer of the mendicant preachers. His esteem for them had been contracted at the University of Oxford probably before they had manifested any symptoms of their subsequent degeneracy. When he was raised to his bishopric, the ignorance and dissoluteness of many of his clergy still impelled him to encourage the labours of these fraternities, to the grievous disparagement and discontent of the parochial incumbents. In this, as in every thing he undertook, he was somewhat fervid and impetuous; but he lived long enough to repent of his generous confidence in the sanctity and disinterestedness of these Papal auxiliaries. In 1247 an incident occurred, which must have awakened his suspicions,—(if they were still sleeping)—respecting the spiritual usefulness and efficacy of the new orders. Two Franciscans were dispatched to England, armed with a formidable apparatus of credentials, for the extortion of money on behalf of the Pontiff. Six thousand marks—(probably full 50,000*l.* of our present money)—was the moderate sum demanded from the clergy of the diocese of Lincoln! The enormity of the impost, and the pompous insolence of the exactors, filled the honest prelate with indignation and amazement. He told the friars, to their faces, that it was dishonourable and impracticable; and positively refused to entertain it for an instant, until the sense of the nation should be taken upon its lawfulness. Notwithstanding this intrepid repulse of the mendicants, he succeeded, the next year, in obtaining from Innocent IV. authority to reform the religious orders in his diocese. The letters which conferred this power on him, like all other instruments from Rome, were inordinately costly; and the event shows that their price was the chief motive which reconciled the Pontiff to such an appearance of concession.

In pursuance of this commission, the bishop determined to take into his own custody the rents of the religious houses, in order that he might appropriate to the services of piety, the wealth which had hitherto been wasted in luxury and pomp. This proceeding immediately produced an equally profitable appeal to the Holy See; and the result was, that Grostete, though an aged man, was compelled to answer it in person, and, for that purpose, to undergo the toil and the expense of a journey to Lyons, then the residence of the Pope. The decision, as might be expected, was adverse to the reforming bishop. It, however, overwhelmed his unsuspecting nature with consternation; and he openly remonstrated with the Pontiff on his duplicity. His astonishment must have been deepened by the reply of Innocent to his expostulations. "What concern is this of yours?" said he. "*You have delivered your own soul; and I have done my pleasure, in showing favour to the monks. Is your eye evil because I am good?*" On this eruption of shameless and almost profane effrontery, Grostete was overheard to mutter—"O money, money, how vast is thy power every where—how irresistible at Rome!" The words reached the ears of the Pope; but they only produced a burst of invective, in which he charged the English with a merciless propensity to grind and impoverish each other, and accused the Bishop himself of a tyrannical and rapacious design upon the property of pious and hospitable men! This language, from the most notorious plunderer in Europe, nearly reduced the bishop to despair. He was, nevertheless, resolved to leave behind him his testimony against these iniquities; which he accordingly did, by delivering to the Pope, and two of his Cardinals, copies of a long protest against the flagitious practices of the Pontifical court. The issue of this disastrous adventure almost drove him to the resignation of his crozier; and he was withheld from the execution of his purpose only by

the recollection, that, to vacate his see, might only be to expose it to a speedier inroad of rapine and abuse.

From this time, he accordingly devoted himself more zealously than ever to his episcopal duties; in the discharge of which, he was, no doubt, perpetually invigorated by the indignant recollection of his visit to the Pope. In 1253 the Pontiff put his courage to the proof, by a scandalous exercise of the Papal prerogative of *provision*. He addressed a mandate to the bishop, enjoining him to collate an Italian youth, the nephew of Innocent, to the first vacant canonry in the Cathedral of Lincoln: and he accompanied his injunction with a menace, that excommunication should be the penalty of disobedience. At the same time, he wrote to his Italian agents in England, charging them to ensure the execution of his orders, under the capacious protection of the *non obstante* clause, which bowed down all existing usages and canons beneath the feet of the existing Pope. The answer of Grostete, of which the following is the substance, would alone be sufficient to immortalize him. He begins by declaring his entire readiness to obey all *Apostolical commands* with reverent and filial devotion: but adds, that, out of pure zeal for the paternal honours of his Holiness, he was, likewise, prepared to resist every thing which might be in opposition to the Apostolical precepts. Now, of all the detestable violations of those precepts, none could possibly be worse, than to deprive the souls of Christian men of the blessings of pastoral ministration: and it was manifestly impossible that the Apostolic See (to whom all power was given, not for destruction, but for edification) should command or attempt any thing which might have a tendency so execrable, so abominable, and so pernicious to the human race. For this reason it was, that he found himself under the necessity of most *filially and obediently disobeying* and resisting the requisitions, contained in the letters which had recently been addressed to him: and, in

so doing, he conceived himself to be very far from the guilt of rebellion. On the contrary, in this very act of resistance, he was but rendering precisely that measure of filial reverence and honour, which was righteously due from him to the Apostolic father.\*—The letter of Grostete, however, did by no means reconcile Innocent to this sort of dutiful disobedience. He burst out into violent fury, and swore by Peter and by Paul, that he was well-nigh resolved to make this delirious old man an example and an *astonishment* to the world. Is not the king of England—he exclaimed—my vassal, or rather, my bond-slave? and could I not, by a single word to him, consign this doting priest in a moment to imprisonment and infamy?—And from this paroxysm the Pontiff was scarcely recalled by the remonstrances of his Cardinals, who were sensible of the danger of proceeding to extremities against a man of Grostete's reputation for piety and learning.

The wrath of the Pontiff, however, was fiercer than the words of his wise men. The sentence of excommunication went forth against the rebellious prelate: and the result was fearfully ominous to the majesty of Rome. The thunderbolt fell harmless at the feet of the recusant; and Grostete continued, to the end of his days, in quiet possession of his dignity. Those days, indeed, were then numbered. At the end of the same year, he was seized with the disorder which terminated all his conflicts and perturbations: and, next to the prospects of a better world, his chief consolation was, to pour out his sorrows into the hearts of his confidential chaplains. His last conversations show that his spiritual vision was enlightened to perceive, that the whole scheme of the Papal government was *enmity with God*. His eyes were, then at least, widely open to the frightful mischief of the Mendicant institution; and he bitterly deplored

\* The whole of the letter is in Matthew Paris, Anno 1253, p. 749, 750.

that the devotees of poverty should be converted into the *publicans* and extortioners of the Pope, and that the vilest secular passions should lurk beneath the garb of humility and indigence. But the burden of his lamentations was, the positively *Anti-Christian* character of the Romish hierarchy; for, by what other name, he asked, but that of *Anti-Christ*, are we to designate a power that labours to destroy the souls which Christ came to save and to redeem?—At last the spirit of prophecy seemed to burst upon him, and he exclaimed, that nothing but the edge of the sword could deliver the Church from this Egyptian Oct. 9. bondage. In the midst of his lamentations 1353. his voice failed him; and, soon after he expired. His best encomium is the exultation of Innocent, who, on hearing of his death, exclaimed, "I rejoice, and let every true son of the Church rejoice with me, that my great enemy is removed."

The position taken up by this illustrious Christian against the Papal perversions was not, it will be observed, upon purely doctrinal grounds. His veneration for the Apostolic chair was deep and fervent, more especially in the earlier period of his life. His complaint was, that the seat of unity and of truth should be usurped by a spirit, which was, practically, adverse to the truth, and which converted Christian unity into a uniformity of servitude. His extant writings, however, are sufficient to satisfy us that the seeds of genuine *protestantism* were in his heart. Thus much appears to be confessed by a recent historian of the Church; who yet is unwilling to allow that he was in possession of the only secret which can invest a Christian with the peace that passeth understanding. I profess myself unable, distinctly, to comprehend the views of this writer respecting the faith of Grostete. He tells us that, "like many of the best divines of those days, this Bishop knew not the just nature of the Christian article of justification by Jesus Christ the righteous:" and yet, within a

few lines, he adds, that "dependence on God, as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, was his grand practical principle."\* But without stopping to reconcile these statements, we may, at the very least, confidently regard this extraordinary man as a noble representative of all the intelligence and piety which, in those days, began to array themselves against the abuses of spiritual power. His praise is written in the pages of an honest monk, who, though superstitious in his devotion to the Romish supremacy, has not scrupled to describe the holy Bishop of Lincoln as "the open rebuker of the King and the Pope, the reprover of prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of presbyters, the instructor of the clergy, the supporter of scholars, the preacher to the people, the prosecutor of the dissolute, the diligent searcher of the Scriptures,† and the *hammer* of the Romanists, who were objects of his contempt." And, in another place, he observes that the harshest measures of the Bishop against the religious houses were, probably, dictated by a regard to the welfare of the souls committed to his charge. It further appears that his religion, though profound, was far from repulsive and morose. "His hospitable board was graced by liberality and abundance, by cheerfulness and affability. His spiritual table was 'furnished forth' with the stores of fervent devotion, and contrition even to tears. In his exercise of the episcopal office he was venerable, laborious, and unwearied."‡

It is truly remarkable that the obsequies of Grostete were respectfully attended, not only by the secular, but even by the regular clergy of his diocese. It is still more remarkable, that after the manner of those times, his memory has been honoured by legendary

\* Milner's Church History, vol. iv. p. 60, 61.

† "*Scripturarum diversarum*," are the words of Matthew Paris, p. 754, intimating, most probably, that the Bishop had examined the whole range of the Scriptures; a rare commendation in those days.

‡ Matthew Paris, p. 754.

prodigies, such as are usually produced to attest the sanctity of the faithful champions of the Church. It is gravely related by Matthew Paris, that the Bishop of London, then in the neighbourhood of the episcopal palace of Buckden, was suddenly surprised by a strain of ravishing melody, which however, was unheard by his attendants; and that the time at which this celestial music saluted him, turned out, on inquiry, to be the precise hour of the decease of his brother of Lincoln. He also informs us, that about the same hour, certain Minorite friars, who were wandering in the neighbourhood, and had lost their way, were astonished by the solemn chime of bells, so clear and distinct, that, when the morning came, they eagerly inquired the occasion of it. Nothing of the kind had been heard in the neighbourhood; but, on their arrival at Buckden, it appeared that, at that very time, the Bishop was breathing his last.\*

But it would have required an army of men like Grostete to retard the accumulation of Papal abuse, during a long and feeble reign like that of Henry III. The vigour of Henry's successor, Edward I., was displayed in harassing and insulting his clergy, by the most arbitrary exactions; which he carried into effect, in defiance of the bull of Boniface VIII., forbidding any contribution of the Church to the necessities of the State without his express permission. His measures, therefore, would naturally produce any

\* In addition to these wonders, a great posthumous exploit has been ascribed to Grostete. It is said that Innocent IV. was meditating an order to the king of England for disinterring the accursed remains of his inveterate adversary: but that the Bishop appeared to him by night, in his full episcopal habit, and with a terrific countenance and menacing voice, rebuked the Pontiff for his vindictive and most unchristian design. And not content with this, he inflicted with his staff so heavy a blow upon his side, that his Holiness roared with anguish, and never recovered from the effects of the chastisement. These stories are, of course, about as valuable as other coin of the same mintage. They are, however, not altogether worthless for our purpose. They prove, at least, that, in that age, an intrepid resistance to Romish profligacy was not sufficient to forfeit the veneration even of monks: and the last of them, perhaps, may show the terrors which integrity and courage could inflict upon the conscience of an unprincipled tyrant.

effect, rather than that of encouraging, among ecclesiastics, a spirit of disaffection to the Roman see. And it is worthy of observation, that, distinguished as he was for energy and wisdom, he never could summon fortitude enough to discontinue the shameful tribute, which had been imposed by John, and which, during the whole time of Henry III., had been remitted to Rome with infamous punctuality. The miserable reign of Edward II. is almost a nullity in the history of the Church; and it was not until the days of Edward III., that this badge of vassalage was shaken off, and legislative provision made against the systematic encroachments of the Papacy. We are now approaching to the days of Wiclif; but before his introduction, it will be necessary to detain the reader, for a moment, in order to present to his attention the two illustrious names of Bradwardine and Fitzralph; the latter of whom was an object of the deepest veneration with our Reformer.

Bradwardine was one of those humble and contemplative spirits, whose lives exhibit to a corrupt world an image of almost celestial serenity and peace. It is true that he acted as confessor and confidential chaplain to Edward, in his warlike expeditions. But it is also true that, in this office, he laboured, faithfully and nobly, to mitigate, by the precepts of the Gospel, the atrocities of

Contumelious, beastly, mad-brained war:

and the most glorious testimony to his services is to be found in the professed belief of some writers of the period in question, that the signal victories of the chivalrous king are to be ascribed, rather to the virtue and sanctity of his chaplain, than to the gallantry or genius either of the monarch or his captains. It is further most honourable to his memory, that he had the courage to oppose the mild genius of the Gospel to the martial impetuosity of his royal master, and to remind him, in the flush of victory, that



"cursed is he who maketh flesh his aim, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." Equally honourable it was to the monarch himself, that his veneration and attachment were only strengthened by the holy freedom and faithfulness of his chaplain. When the primacy became vacant, the monks of Canterbury chose Bradwardine as archbishop: but Edward was unable to part with his spiritual counsellor; and, for this reason only, refused to confirm their election. On a second vacancy, their choice again fell upon him, and then the king acquiesced. Bradwardine, accordingly, travelled to Avignon, for the purpose of obtaining the Papal consecration to his office; and there, the extreme simplicity of his appearance and deportment exposed him to the derision of that frivolous and worldly court, and provoked an act of unmannerly and heartless insult. One Cardinal Hugh, a nephew of the Pontiff, imagined that he should amuse and gratify the servile crowd, by introducing into the hall a person, habited like a peasant, and seated on an ass, with a petition to the Pope that he would be pleased to appoint him to the see of Canterbury. But, on this occasion, it is pleasing to observe, that sanctity and innocence, were triumphant in the very haunts of profligacy and folly. It was felt, even there, that a man like Bradwardine, was immeasurably beyond the reach of vulgar insolence and levity. The Pope and his Cardinals, to their credit be it spoken, resented the indignity offered to this eminent churchman; and the miserable jest brought confusion only on the head of its contriver.

Bradwardine was consecrated at Lambeth, in 1349: but yet he can scarcely be numbered on the catalogue of our prelates; for no sooner was he seated in his dignity, than he was removed, as we may humbly presume, to that blessedness, of which his walk on earth was, to all appearance, one continued antepast. He expired only seven days after his consecration; and he is now known to us, not as the primate of

England, but as the champion of "the cause of God against Pelagius." The error of that heresiarch, was undoubtedly, most perilous: for it denied that there is in our nature, "an original taint, an innate and congenital disease, to the existence of which, the heart of every one, who dares look into his own, bears an unwilling, but unerring, testimony." His dread of this perversion, may have impelled Bradwardine to too close an agreement with the great adversary of Pelagius. But, notwithstanding this, it still is undeniable that he was one of those, who, in times of gross spiritual ignorance, walked and rejoiced in a light, which the surrounding darkness was unable to comprehend.

From the accounts which have been preserved to us of this extraordinary man, it would appear, that his genius naturally prompted him to the pursuit of severe and exact science. His proficiency in the scholastic learning, procured him the title of the Profound Doctor; but in addition to this, his mathematical attainments were of the highest order, for the age in which he lived. His works on geometry and arithmetic are in print; and he compiled astronomical tables, which have never been published, but which were possessed, in manuscript, by his biographer Sir Henry Saville. The discipline which his intellect underwent in the prosecution of these studies, strongly manifests itself in his theological writings. His great work against Pelagianism, is described to us "one regular connected series of reasoning, from principles or conclusions demonstrated before;" and if ever he fails in the process of strict demonstration, the defect is rather to be ascribed to the nature of the subject, than to the remissness or incapacity of the author. But the most admirable peculiarity of his mind is this,—that his habitual rigour of inquiry, never appears to have impaired the humility of his temper, or the warmth of his affections. His heart seems to have been,

throughout, quite as vividly at work, as his understanding. *Thoroughly furnished*, as he was, with all the mental accomplishments of his age, every thought of his was evidently *brought into captivity* to the wisdom and righteousness of God. It is matter of unspeakable refreshment and edification to hear the profound geometer and schoolman of the fourteenth century, expressing his grateful devotion to the Father of mercies, in such words as these: "How intense and how unbounded is Thy love to me, O Lord! Whereas, my love, how feeble and remiss!—my gratitude, how cold and how ~~in~~constant! Far be it from Thee that Thy love should resemble mine! O Thou, who fillest heaven and earth, why fillest Thou not this narrow heart? . . . . Most gracious Lord, by Thy love Thou has prevented me, wretch that I am, who had no love for Thee, but was at enmity with my Maker and Redeemer. I see, Lord, that it is easy to say and write these things, but very difficult to execute them. Do Thou, therefore, to whom nothing is difficult, grant that I may more easily practise these things with my heart, than utter them with my lips. . . . . Thou, who preventest Thy servants with Thy gracious love, whom dost Thou not elevate with the hope of finding Thee? And what canst Thou deny to him who loves Thee, who is in need, and who supplicates Thine aid? Suffer me, I pray, to reason with Thy majestic goodness, that my hope may be enlarged. It is not the manner, even of human friendship, to reject a needy friend, especially when the ability to relieve is abundant."

It has already been intimated that his theology, in a great measure, derived its complexion from the spirit of Augustine, the mighty antagonist of Pelagius. But well would it have been for the Christian world, if all the followers of Augustine had imbibed from his writings, a temper as meek and humble as that of Bradwardine! A predestinarian, in theory,

he undoubtedly was. But what was the practical efficacy of this ingredient in his divinity? We may read the answer to this question in the following words:—"Why do we fear to preach the doctrine of predestination of saints, and of the genuine grace of God? Is there any cause to dread, lest man should be induced to despair of his condition, when his hope is demonstrated to be founded on God alone? Is there not much stronger reason for him to despair, if, in pride and unbelief, he founds his hope of salvation on himself?" Whatever may be the merits of the predestinarian doctrine, as tried by the principles of sound philosophy, or by the language of Scripture, one thing, at least, is certain,—that the Church might regard it with comparative tranquillity, if its fruits had always been as mildly flavoured, as those which it produced in the *good and honest heart* of this holy man! Uncharitable austerity, and spiritual arrogance, are the plants which are apt to thrive in the soil of what is now called Calvinism. But this was a growth which could not live in the soul of such a being as Bradwardine.

As an adversary of Pelagius, he denounced the freedom of the human will; but it is obvious, after all, that his warfare, in reality, is not against the perfect free agency, but against the self-sufficiency, of man. It was much the fashion of that age to question the necessity of a *preventive* grace. The spiritual influences of God, it was imagined, were to be earned by works positively meritorious, or by tempers and dispositions, which might duly render the man an object of Divine favour; so that our nature might, either be invested, as it were, with a strict legal title to the benefit; or, if not, at least, with a sort of equitable claim to it, which the bountiful goodness of the Deity would by no means resist. *Condignity* was the term invented by the schools to indicate the higher of these two moral conditions; the lower was denoted by the word *congruity*. In the

one case, the man is actually *worthy* of the grace of God; in the other, he is *fitly prepared* for its reception. These fancies were, both of them, repudiated and condemned by Bradwardine; as they are, at this day, by our own Church. According to our theology, the fittest *preparation* for the influences of the Spirit of holiness, is a contrite acknowledgment of our own *unworthiness*. "The meritorious dignity of doing well, we utterly renounce;"\* for it invests man with the right to bargain with his Maker. The notion of *congruity* we, as decidedly, reject; for, as Bradwardine observes, it represents the Holy One as disposing of his favours for a cheap and vile consideration. And the practical result is, that, on the one hand, we are to labour for the grace of God as urgently as if our own deeds could purchase or procure it: and, on the other, to acknowledge that our enjoyment of the gift, yea, and our power to labour for it, are solely to be ascribed to his gratuitous mercy.

Bradwardine, like many other pious and admirable Catholics, is an illustrious instance, to show that genuine scriptural religion might grow up, unmolested, in the bosom of the Romish Church, even in the season of its deepest corruption. Devout and thoughtful scholars, like him, were not the men whom the Papal Church either feared or hated. The genius of ardent inquiry gave no uneasiness to her, so long as it was confined in the imprisonment of ponderous tomes. But if ever the mystic vessel that contained it was unsealed, so that the captive spirit could go forth, and freely embody itself before the eyes of the whole world, alarm and displeasure were instantly spread throughout her ranks; and the most direful spells were instantly employed to conjure back the restless power to its confinement. The terrors or the glories of martyrdom were reserved for men who stepped out of their cloistered retirement, to "the

\* Hooker.

dust and heat" of an open conflict against the adversary of man's improvement; and of this stamp, undoubtedly, was Richard Fitzralph. This eminent confessor was bred at Oxford, and was promoted by Edward III. to the archbishopric of Armagh. His residence in the University had given him abundant opportunities of observing the mischief and confusion occasioned by the predominance of the Mendicant orders. These fraternities had been called into existence more than a century before. It had been perceived by the court of Rome that both the monkish and secular clergy had, in a great measure, lost the confidence of the people, and that a new institution would be needful for the preservation of her own influence and dominion. We shall have occasion to advert hereafter, somewhat more particularly, to the rise, the progress, and the degeneracy of the Mendicants. At present, it may be sufficient to observe, that the indignation of Richard Fitzralph was deeply moved by the calamitous effects of their influence on the University of Oxford. Not content with a pertinacious intrusion into academic offices, their restless and usurping spirit invaded the peace of private families. They spared no pains to seduce into their own ranks the most promising students; and such was their success, that parents at last became fearful of sending their sons to the Universities, lest they should, eventually, be consigned to a life of wandering beggary. The consequence of this alarm was, that within the recollection of Fitzralph himself, the number of students had been reduced from 30,000 to 6,000. He was, accordingly, prepared for any opportunity of helping to suppress this enormous evil: and being accidentally in London at a time when the encroachments of these orders had roused the opposition of the clergy of that city, he engaged in the conflict against them with so much cordiality and vigour, that he was summoned by them to answer their appeal at Avignon. On this occasion his for-

titude did not desert him. To the very face of Innocent VI. and his assembled Cardinals, he maintained boldly, and at great length, his conclusions against the friars: and, among other things, he charged them with hearing the confessions of professed nuns, without the license of their superiors, and of married women without the knowledge of their husbands. From this period, the remainder of his life appears to have been a constant scene of hardship and danger; and, if we are to give implicit credit to old Fox, Providence was incessantly, and often miraculously, at work for his deliverance. His persecutors repeatedly met him in the open streets, in broad day-light, and yet they had no eyes to see him, or no hands to apprehend him. He fell frequently among thieves, but the money he lost was always restored to him again, by portions, in time of his necessity and famine. The sea-ports were often filled with officers who were instructed to lie in wait for him; and yet their activity and watchfulness were in vain. But by far the most important of his deliverances was that, by which he had been extricated from "the profound vanities of Aristotle's subtilty, and brought to the study of the Scriptures of God." The above account is given us by the martyrologist, as derived from a certain manuscript prayer or confession of Fitzralph's, in which the whole history of his life is described. The true version of it evidently is, that his latter days were grievously imbibited by persecution, but that if his enemies sought his life, their malice was defeated. After passing seven or eight years in painful and dangerous exile, he expired at Avignon; and was honoured, in his death, by the acknowledgment of a certain Cardinal, that, on that day, a mighty pillar of Christ's Church was fallen.

This is the substance of what is known respecting Archbishop Fitzralph. Of the general complexion of his religious feelings and opinions we may safely judge from the opening words of the prayer or con-

fession above alluded to, and which have been preserved to us by Fox, in the original Latin: "To Thee be praise, glory, and thanksgiving, O Jesus most holy, most powerful, most precious; Thou who hast said, I am *the way, the truth, and the life*. A way without error, truth without a cloud, and life without end. For Thou Thyself hast shown me the way—Thou Thyself hast taught me the truth—and Thou Thyself hast promised me the life. Thou wast my way in exile—my truth in counsel—and Thou wilt be my life in reward."\* Years of anxiety and banishment, as we have seen were the earthly recompense of this holy prelate: but we may reasonably presume that, to the last, he persevered inflexibly in the way, with unshaken constancy defended the truth, and with pious hope looked onward to the life!

Enough has been said to show that the genuine spirit of Christianity was by no means extinct in our land, even in those seasons when the signs of animation were the most languid. The breath and the pulse of life were still to be discerned. Though the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint, the vitals were not fatally invaded. There was clearly hope for those who would devote themselves, in the spirit of love and faith, to the office of rekindling the spark, and causing the heart to beat once more with a vigorous and healthy movement. It must, however, be confessed, that the task was one which required an almost superhuman combination of activity and skill. For the misfortune was, that the truth had, for the most part, retired to the strong holds of religious and contemplative retirement: and its action there was scarcely powerful enough to keep up the moral circulation throughout the social mass, and to preserve its extremities from all the symptoms of a mortal decay. There is little reason to believe that the lower classes, or even the middling orders, (if

\* Fox, 464—472.



any such orders could then be said to exist,) had the means of coming even to a partial knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. One dubious pre-eminence our country, indeed, seems to have enjoyed for several centuries. She was singularly exempt from the suspicion of heresy, and is occasionally complimented by the Pontiffs for the distinguished purity of her faith. In the reign of Henry the Second, it is true, a small band of foreigners, not more than thirty in number, had settled in England, and had brought with them various strange and extravagant opinions, such as the rejection of the sacraments, and of the ordinance of matrimony. They are supposed to have belonged to the sect, known by the name of Cathari, which was then numerous and active in the north of Italy, and in Germany. Their leader was one Gerard; and if their object was to disseminate their doctrines, their success assuredly was such, as to justify the commendations bestowed by the Popes on the inaptitude of our country for the entertainment of heretical notions. The only fruit of their missionary labours was one solitary female, who abjured her new profession as soon as it became dangerous. The demeanour of these people was inoffensive, and their personal habits blameless. But their opinions soon became notorious, and exposed them to the severity of ecclesiastical discipline. By the authority of the king they were summoned before a synod of bishops. To arguments they replied, that their duty was to believe and not to dispute; to menaces, that our Lord had said, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." The judges, wearied out, as Dr. Lingard informs us, by their *obstinacy*,\* consigned them over to the secular arm, by which they were branded on the forehead, stripped to the waist, and whipped through the city of Oxford, where the synod was held. According to one account they were

\* Ling. ii. 420.

turned out to perish miserably, in utter destitution of raiment, shelter, or sustenance ! These, we are told, were the first heretics ever seen in England, since the Saxon invasion. The second, and, so far as we are informed, the last adventure of the same kind, occurred in the reign of John, when certain sectaries, by the name of Albigenses, arrived in this country, some of whom, as Knighton\* concisely informs us, were burned alive.

Either by these merciless severities, or by other causes the realm of England seems to have been nearly separated from all communion with that restless spirit of innovation, which had long been wandering over the European continent. But the absence of fanaticism was but a poor compensation for the want of every thing like sound religious instruction. Many bright examples may, doubtless, be found in our ecclesiastical annals, of sincere devotion, extensive learning, and fervid zeal, among the prelates and clergy of that age. But, had all our primates and bishops, during the period in question, combined the vigour and activity of Grostete with the enlightened piety of Bradwardine, it is doubtful whether they could have sent forth an influence powerful enough to reach the general mass of the population. A dreary gulf was *fixed* between the lordly barons, and their degraded vassals. Hopeless degradation appears to have been the inheritance of the peasantry; and nothing but the charity which is strong as death, could be sufficient to encounter the resistance of their obdurate ignorance, and almost desperate wretchedness. It was even questioned, in those times, whether a *villain* could be admitted into heaven; and nothing, most certainly, could be better adapted to render him unfit for such admission, than the prevalence of so brutalizing a suspicion. That

\* Knighton, 2418. No mention of this fact is to be found in Matthew Paris, who, nevertheless, gives a hideous picture of the impiety of the Albigenses. Anno, 1213.

the generality of the priesthood, whether monastic or secular, were utterly unfit for the office of preparing their people for the hour of death, or the day of judgment, is beyond all question. Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Archbishop Peckham vehemently denounces the "ignorance, folly, and grossness" of the clergy. He complains, that those places which most urgently needed instruction, were never so much as visited; so that the words of the prophet were calamitously verified—*the children asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them: the poor and destitute cried for water, and their tongue was parched up*. In order to remedy this crying scandal, he commanded that each parochial clergyman should preach to his people, either by himself or a substitute, once, at least, in every quarter of a year; and should expound to them in a popular manner, "without any fantastic texture of subtilty," the fourteen articles of faith, the ten commandments, the twofold precept of love to God and our neighbour, the seven works of charity, the seven capital sins with their progeny, the seven principal virtues, and the seven sacraments of grace. And lest the clergy should convert their own ignorance into a dispensation from this order, he adds a variety of instructions for the proper discharge of the duty enjoined, which convey, of themselves, a bitter rebuke to the incompetency of the spiritual guides.\* All this while, the people were left not only without the Scriptures, but almost without devotional helps of any kind, in any degree adapted to their wants. What benefit could they derive from the volumes of Anselm, or of Grostete? How were

\* Constitutions Johannis Peckham Archiep. Cantuar. Wilk. Conc. vol. ii. p. 54—56. There is something curious in the Archbishop's instructions relative to extreme unction. He recommends that this sacrament should be administered even to those who may be labouring under phrensy, or any sort of mental alienation, provided that the party had, before his seizure, expressed any concern for his salvation; having, as he tells us, found from experience, that the receiving of this rite would either procure the sufferer a *lucid interval*, or at least be, in some way, instrumental to his spiritual benefit.

their spiritual thirst and famine to be relieved by Archbishop Edmund's *Speculum Ecclesie*, or Bradwardine's assault upon the heresy of Pelagius? The earlier part of the fourteenth century, indeed, was memorable for the spirit with which the English language began to be cultivated. Such of the clergy as had leisure or taste for the occupation, frequently addicted themselves to poetry, and occasionally infused into their compositions much of a serious and devotional character. Among these, Rolle, the hermit of Ham-pole, has earned for himself an honourable name; and he still more amply merited the gratitude of his countrymen by translating the psalms and hymns of the Church into English prose, and by adding a commentary to each verse. Various other portions of the Scriptures appear to have been, from time to time, translated by intelligent and pious clergymen, for the use of their respective congregations: but, on the whole, it is quite indisputable, that in the fourteenth century, nothing had been done of sufficient efficacy to make any considerable impression on the gross spiritual ignorance of the British population.

The case, therefore, as regards the religious condition of the people of England, at the time of Wiclif's appearance, seems to have been simply this. The license of opinion, which had spread itself over many parts of Christendom, had scarcely approached them. They were, almost wholly, untainted with any doctrinal heresy,\* and little in the habit of opposing the

\* This statement is, of course, not to be taken in its utmost latitude. Heretical opinions would, doubtless, be occasionally creeping in. For instance, we find that a synod was held at London by Archbishop Peckham, in 1286, for the purpose of condemning certain articles, which had recently been maintained in the province of Canterbury, relative to the sacramental mystery. The positions in question, however, were not of a nature which was very likely to recommend them much to the public attention. They involved several questions of great scholastic nicety; and they who contended for them are described as persons actuated solely by a vain-glorious passion for novelties. They did not assail the doctrine of transubstantiation, though they represented it in a manner somewhat different from the orthodox verity. The most formidable of these articles was the seventh, which affirmed that, in this question, man

spiritual supremacy of Rome. Throughout all ranks, however, it had been more or less deeply felt, that her power had frequently been exercised in a spirit of intolerable arrogance and rapacity; and it was likewise known that the sword of temporal and spiritual dominion had been often wielded with atrocious severity, by the successor of St. Peter, against those who questioned or resisted his authority. The exactions and usurpations of the Pontifical court could be readily estimated by those, who were profoundly indifferent to her aberrations from the primitive purity of faith; and the exterminating fury with which she had smitten her adversaries, must have begun to raise up certain misgivings, as to the legitimacy of that power, which could be maintained only by fire and sword. And hence it was that England, although a citadel of orthodoxy in matters of mere belief, was, in those times, by no means the seat of contented allegiance to the Apostolic See. She might, perhaps, have been satisfied to slumber for centuries longer, under the sedative influence of the Romish superstition, if the burden of Romish dominion had been less galling and oppressive. As it was, she had an ear to hear the lessons of any teacher, endowed with address, and energy enough to expose the corruptions which had so long insulted her patience, and exhausted her resources.

It is hoped that the foregoing survey, imperfect as it is, may furnish the reader with some conception of the progress of feeling and opinion, in this country, relative to ecclesiastical affairs; and may enable him to discern something of the process by which the public mind was, at least partially, ripened for the labours and services of Wiclif.

were not bound by the authority of the Pope, or of the ancient Fathers, but solely by that of the Bible, and "necessary reason." The eighth and last of these articles maintained, that "there is in man only one *form*, namely, the rational soul, and no other *substantial form*," from which opinion, all the forenamed heresies are said to issue. Wicl. Conc. vol. ii. p. 123.

## CHAPTER III.

1324—1367.

*Birth of Wicklif—Wicklif admitted at Queen's College, Oxford—Removes to Merton College—Acquires the title of Evangelic Doctor—His mastery in the scholastic learning—His Tract on the Last Age of the Church, occasioned by the Plague of 1348—He commences his attacks on the Mendicant Orders—Notice of the first institution of the Mendicants—Their efficacy on their first Establishment—Their enormous increase—Their rapacity and turbulence—Their introduction into England in 1221—Its bad effects—Richard Fitzralph's opposition to them, followed up by Wicklif—The sum of Wicklif's objection to them contained in a Tract of his, published twenty years later—Letters of Fraternity Oxford Statute in restraint of the Mendicants—Interference of Parliament—Wicklif presented to the Rectory of Fillingham, which he exchanges afterwards for that of Lutgershall—Promoted to the Wardenship of Baliol College, which he resigns for the Headship of Canterbury Hall, founded by Archbishop Islep—His appointment pronounced void by Archbishop Langham—Wicklif appeals to the Pope, who ultimately ratifies Langham's decree—The Pope's decision confirmed by the Crown—Wicklif vindicated against the suspicion of being impelled by resentment to hostilities against the Papacy—The Pope revives his claim of homage and tribute from England—Edward III. lays the demand before Parliament, who resolve that it ought to be resisted—Wicklif challenged to defend the Resolution of Parliament—His reply to the challenge.*

ABOUT six miles from the town of Richmond, in Yorkshire, is the small village of Wicklif, which, from the Conquest to the end of the sixteenth century, was the residence of a family of the same name, who were lords of the manor, and patrons of the rectory. In this village, or its immediate vicinity, <sup>1324,</sup> there is good reason to believe that John <sup>Birth of Wicklif</sup> Wicklif\* was born, about the year 1324. It is, fur-

\* The orthography of the name, in different writers, is so perplexing by its variety, that I have thought it expedient to adopt that which has the smallest number of letters. With Lewis, therefore, I shall write the Reformer—WICKLIFF.

ther, probable, that he was a member of the family who were possessors of the property. Some doubt may, indeed, be raised respecting this point from the facts that the name of John Wiclif, is not to be found in the extant records of the household;\* and that no reference to his parentage has yet been discovered in his writings. His own silence, however, and that of his relatives may, reasonably enough, be ascribed to the alienation which would be unavoidably occasioned by his defection from the religious principles of the age. The Wiclifs, if they were faithful to their creed, would, not unnaturally, be slow to claim any connexion with the reputed heretic: and the persecuted teacher, on the other hand, would find but little delight in adverting to his kindred, if he perceived that his opinions were such as made them willing to forget him. It has been surmised by his latest biographer,† that something of this feeling is betrayed in his Treatise on Wedded Men and Wives, in which he says, that "if a child yield himself to meekness and poverty, and flee covetousness and pride, from a dread of sin, and to please God . . . . by so doing he getteth many enemies to his elders; and they say that *he slandereth all their noble kindred, who were ever held true men and worshipful.*"‡

At the distance of five centuries, and in the absence of positive documents, it would be vain to hope for absolute certainty in a question of this description. It is, however, satisfactory to think that we live in times, when the most distinguished families would be as proud to claim consanguinity with Wiclif, as the obscurest in his own days may have been anxious to disclaim it. We are now living in the enjoyment of blessings, in the acquisition of which he may justly be reckoned among the foremost and most illustrious adventurers. It is, therefore, nothing more than jus-

\* Vaughan, vol. i. p. 234.

† Ibid. p. 235.

‡ M.S. C. C. C. Cambridge: "On Wedded Men and their Wives, and their Children also."

ance, that the widest possible diffusion should be given to the history of his services and benefactions to the cause of scriptural truth amongst us. If any thing can rally our fainting energies in times which savour so rankly of "things that be of men," it is the contemplation of noble and elevated examples of heroism and self-devotion, displayed in support of "the things that be of God."

Of the childhood of Wiclif nothing whatever is known. Oxford was the scene of his maturer studies, and of his future glory. His name occurs in the list of students first admitted at Queen's College, a seminary then of very recent foundation. Wiclif admitted at Queen's College, Oxford. It was established in the year 1340, chiefly by the munificence of Philippa, Queen of Edward the Third, influenced and directed by the zeal of Robert Eglesfield, her chaplain. For reasons now unknown, he speedily removed from Queen's to Merton College, Removes to Merton College. a society illustrious for many of the most celebrated names in learning and divinity. In the course of that century it supplied the English Church with three metropolitans, Thomas Bradwardine "*the Profound Doctor*," Simon Mepham, and Simon Islep. Within its precincts, Walter Burley collected the solid erudition which acquired for him the title of the "*Perspicuous Doctor*," and which elevated him to the office of preceptor to Edward IV. The renowned William Occham was another of the sons of Merton, known as the *Singular Doctor* and *Venerable Inceptor*; and, according to some accounts, that prodigy of intuitive genius, the immortal Duns Scotus himself, is to be numbered among the luminaries of this distinguished fraternity.

In these seats of learning and piety it was the lot of Wiclif to acquire a title more truly Acquires the title of Evangelic Doctor. honourable than any of those above enumerated, that of the *Evangelic or Gospel Doctor*. Like all other students of his day who aspired



to eminence, he, of course, devoted himself, with intense application, to the scholastic philosophy. Such was his diligence, that he is said to have committed to memory many of the more intricate portions of Aristotle;\* and such was his success, that the bitterest enemy of his name† has described him as "second to none in philosophy, and in scholastic discipline altogether incomparable." His mastery in the scholastic learning. With the study of the schoolmen he associated those of the civil and the canon law; accomplishments, in that age, indispensable to the reputation of a consummate scholar and divine. His industry, further, embraced the municipal laws and customs of his own country,—a pursuit not, perhaps, so fashionable at that period, but quite as worthy of the attention of an Englishman as the laws of the empire, or the compilations of Gratian. His theological principles were formed by a diligent perusal of the primitive Christian writers; and, chiefly, of four of the most distinguished fathers of the Church, St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Basil, and St. Gregory. Of more modern divines, the two that stood highest in his estimation appear to have been the illustrious Robert Grostete, Bishop of Lincoln in the early part of the preceding century, and Richard Fitzralph, formerly Chancellor of Oxford and Professor of Divinity there, and promoted to the see of Armagh about the year 1347. But the studies of Wiclif were most nobly distinguished from those of his contemporaries by his ardent devotion to the sacred Volume itself, which eventually won for him the illustrious appellation above alluded to, of the

\* Lewis, p. 2.

† Knighton de Eventibus Angliæ, Col. 2644. This writer was a canon of Leycester, contemporary with Wiclif, and a cordial hater of him, his doctrines, and his followers. His language is as follows: "Doctor in theologiâ eminentissimus in diebus illis. In philosophiâ nulli reputabatur secundus: in scholasticis disciplinis incomparabilis. Hic maxime nitebatur aliorum ingenia subtilitate scientiæ et profunditate ingenii sui transcendere, et ab opinionibus eorum variare."

Evangelic or Gospel Doctor, and which, above all his other accomplishments, qualified him to impress an image of himself on future generations.

It is, fortunately, somewhat difficult for us, in these times, worthily to represent to ourselves the vigour, the courage, the independence of soul, the strength of purpose, implied in the resolution of a teacher of theology, in the fourteenth century, to take his stand in the citadel of revealed truth, and to regard all human commentaries as mere subordinate outworks and defences. On the one hand, such an instructor had to encounter the frown of Papal Infallibility, which forbade all appeal to the Scriptures, from the authority of the Church. On the other hand, there awaited him the contemptuous scowl of the scholastic Philosophy, which disdained any guide but Aristotle through the labyrinth of theology, and looked with utter scorn on those shallow spirits, who resorted directly to the sacred text for the pure and heavenly science of salvation. In this and the two preceding centuries the compilations of Peter Lombard\* were in much higher and more universal estimation than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "The graduate," says Roger Bacon,† "who reads (or lectures on) the text of Scripture, is compelled to give way to the reader of the Sentences, who every where enjoys honour and precedence. He who reads the Sentences has the choice of his hour, and ample entertainment among the religious orders. He who reads the Bible is destitute of these advantages, and sues, like a mendicant, to the reader of the Sentences, for the use of such hour as it may please him to grant. He who

\* Peter Lombard was Bishop of Paris in the twelfth century. His *book of Sentences* was principally a compilation from the fathers, made, probably, with the best intentions; and designed to fortify religious faith with the aid of the scholastic metaphysica. It was intended to form a complete body of divinity, and was the theological wonder of the Middle Ages.

† See the original, quoted in note (L) to Mosheim's *Eccl. History*, vol. iii. p. 93., from Roger Bacon's *Op. Maj.* published in 1733, at London, by Sam. Jebb, from the original MSS.

reads the *Sums of Divinity*, is every where allowed to hold disputations, and is venerated as master; he who only reads the text is not permitted to dispute at all; *which is absurd!*" Such is the language of the illustrious Friar Bacon, in the thirteenth century. That of John of Salisbury, in the twelfth century, was still stronger. He tells us that, in his time, the more scriptural teachers were "not only rejected as philosophers, but unwillingly endured as clergymen—nay, were scarcely acknowledged to be men. They became objects of derision, and were termed the bullocks of Abraham, or the asses of Balaam."\* If, as some have conjectured, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were the two Apocalyptic Witnesses, well may they be said to have prophesied in sackcloth, in those dark times. They bore, indeed, a perpetual testimony to the truth of the living God; but, all this while, they stood before men as it were in the garb and guise of culprits and of penitents. The record which they bore was heard with irreverence and suspicion. They were received as if they were little better than impostors and deceivers of the people. Like penitents they were scarcely allowed to show themselves in the assemblies of the faithful; or, at all events, were suffered to appear there only in the unworthy and humiliating disguise of a foreign tongue: and few there were who ventured to appeal unto their testimony. In the age of Wiclif, indeed, the sentiment of reverence for the Papacy had, from various causes, been somewhat rudely shaken, in this country: but, still, there were but faint symptoms of any serious defection from the majesty of Romish tradition, and little promise of the reinstatement of the heavenly witnesses in their original dignity and honour. The biblical method of instruction was still

\* "—nec modo philosophos negant, imo nec clericos patiuntur, vix homines sinunt esse; sed boves Abrahæ, vel asinos Balaamitas duntaxat nominant, imo derident." *Metalog.* p. 746. quoted in *Turner's Hist. Engl.* vol. I. p. 508, note (66.)

trampled under foot by the fastidious pride of the scholastic discipline, and by the overbearing authority of *irrefragable* and *seraphic* doctors. And yet, in this state of the public mind it was, that Wiclif had the fortitude and the independence to associate the study of the Scriptures with the keenest pursuit of the scholastic metaphysics; and not only so, but to assign to them the full supremacy which belongs to them, as disclosing to us *the way, the truth, and the life*.

And well was it for the cause of pure and scriptural Christianity, that Wiclif went forth to his achievements, covered over with the panoply of the intellectual knight-errantry of his day: that he was master of "the nice fence, and the active practice" of the schools, as well as potent to wield the two-edged sword of the Spirit. This happy combination of accomplishments served, at least, to win him the respect of all parties. It secured him the reverence of his followers, who must have seen with pride, that their teacher was foremost among the sages and doctors of his time. It silenced the voice of disdain among his adversaries, and effectually disabled them from attempting to cast discredit on his cause, by pointing to the ignorance and incapacity of the advocate. The first open trial of his powers against the corruptions of the time, was in the year 1356

1356, when he put forth a small tract, Wiclif's tract entitled "the Last Age of the Church."\* on "the Last Age of the Church;" occasioned by the plague of 1348. The train of thought, which led to this production, would appear to have been occasioned by certain recent calamities, more tremendous than any which had lighted on the earth since the great plague which made the reign

\* Lewis's account of this Tract is very imperfect. For more satisfactory information respecting it, we are indebted to the industry of Mr. Vaughan. It has never been printed, and exists in MS. only in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, Class c. tab. 3. No. 12., where it was examined by Mr. Vaughan; who conjectures, from the obscurity of several parts, that it must have been transcribed from some very illegible or imperfect copy. Vaughan's Life of Wiclif, vol. i. p. 254, note (30.)

of Justinian so disastrously memorable. The pestilence which broke out in Tartary in the year 1345, after desolating Asia, and part of Africa, extended its ravages to the West, and is supposed to have swept away full one third of the population of Europe. In addition to this calamity, nearly the whole of the European continent had been shaken by earthquakes; and though these convulsions did not extend to England, the country was deluged by incessant rains for many months together, and, at last was smitten by the scourge which had been ravaging the rest of the earth. The destructive malady made its appearance at Dorchester, in August 1348; by November it had reached the metropolis, and thence continued its progress of desolation towards the North. Of the numbers which perished in London no exact account has been preserved. It is certain, however, that for many weeks the daily average of mortality amounted to two hundred; and the lowest computation must fix the whole loss at fifty thousand souls. At this period, Wiclif was about twenty-five years of age; a time of life sufficiently advanced to make a man, like him, an intelligent and reflecting witness of these horrors. So dreadful was the havoc, that, by many, it was regarded as the almost immediate forerunner of the final doom. The Angel of Destruction was supposed to have gone forth upon this commission of vengeance, in order that men might be prepared for the last advent of Jesus Christ. The meditations of Wiclif on this dreadful scourge, appear to have been exalted by the study of certain ancient predictions, ascribed to the celebrated Joachim,\* a Calabrian

\* Respecting this Joachim, consult Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 209—211. 238. 289. 293.; and compare Fleury, vol. xv. p. 595—599. The Papal historian dwells, with evident satisfaction, on the rigid and austere sanctity of the monk, on his threadbare apparel, with its singed and ragged skirts, and on the almost miraculous increase of his alacrity and vigour, which seemed to be more abundant, in proportion to the scantiness of his diet. Of the prophetic gifts of the saint, however, he speaks with prudent reserve, ("il passoit pour avoir le don de prophétie.") And, in truth, it is scarcely to be imagined that any faithful Catholic could dwell, with

Abbot, who lived towards the end of the twelfth century, and who foretold the destruction of the Church of Rome, and the approach of a purer era, under the appellation of the age of the Holy Ghost. These, and similar researches, seem to have brought Wiclif to a persuasion, that the plagues with which the nations had recently been scourged, were indications that the great designs of God were hastening to a close; and that, with the fourteenth century, the world would come to an end. In support of the notion, that between the first and second advent of Christ, four periods of heavy tribulation were to intervene, he relies on the authority of the venerable Bede and St. Bernard. Of these tribulations, the first was the furious and repeated onset of persecution; the second, the pestilent infection of heresy; the third of these calamitous trials was to originate in what Wiclif terms "the secret heresy of the Simonists;" the last was to include the final triumphs of Anti-Christ; "the period of whose approach," he adds, "God only knoweth."\* The whole, however, of these two final visitations, was to be crowded into the space of the fourteenth century; which is accordingly designed by Wiclif as "the Last Age of the World," and so gives its title to the treatise under consideration.

As a prophetic work, this tract of Wiclif is, of course, entirely worthless; but it is extremely valuable as a manifestation of the vigour with which he was girding himself up for a conflict with the powers and Principalities of the Papal empire. The destruction which, of late years, had been hurled upon the earth, had awakened thoughtful men to medita-

much complacency, on predictions which represented the Church of Rome as the fleshly synagogue of Satan, and spoke of it as doomed to certain demolition. Whether these prophecies are rightly ascribed to Joachim, seems rather doubtful. In his name, however, they became, unquestionably, current. The reputed prophecies of Hildegardis, (a nun who lived in the middle of the twelfth century,) are much in the same strain, and were gravely appealed to by John Hus. See Fox's *Martyrs*, vol. i. p. 525.

\* Vaughan, vol. i. p. 257.

tion on the dealings of Him *to whom vengeance belongeth*, and had prompted them to search into the causes of those tremendous chastisements, which they imagined to have recently descended upon the nations. As usual, they looked for those causes on the surface of society; and there they found, among the most conspicuous classes, the customary effect of fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness—namely, a dedication of themselves to toyish and frivolous vanities, an insanely capricious prodigality of apparel\* (one sure mark of a semi-barbarous age,) and a general propensity to voluptuous indulgence; and these were the things, it was concluded, which had brought down upon the kingdom the wrath of the Almighty. Wiclif, it seems, was not content to deal thus superficially with the evil, or *to heal the hurt of the people slightly*. He plunged his knife, directly, into what he conceived to be the depths of the imposthume. He loudly and keenly arraigned the vices of the clergy, and declared that, among them was the seat of the national malady. Like Jeremiah of old, he proclaimed that *from the prophet to the priest every man dealt falsely*; that by their rapacity they *ate up the people as it were bread*; that their sensuality was such as sent up a savour that infected the earth, and “smelt to heaven.” The whole community, he maintained, was corrupted with the fermentation of their pernicious leaven; and against their worldliness was to be directed the public execration, for spreading

\* Contemporary writers furnish a curious account of these extravagances. They mention, with deep abomination, the silken hoods, and the party-coloured coats, and the deep sleeves, and the narrow waists, and the bushy beards, and the *long tails*, and, above all, the sinful prolongation of the pointed shoes, which distinguished the exquisites and the coxcombs of those times. The female sex did not escape the denunciation. The enormous height of their head-dress, with its streaming ribbons, their tunics, half of one colour and half of another, their costly girdles, profusely decorated with embroidery and gold, their exchange of the ambling palfrey for the prancing charger, the unbecoming boldness or levity of their demeanour,—all these were dwelt upon with horror and indignation, as signs of an age ripe for destruction. See Lingard, vol. iv. p. 90.

that degeneracy, which had provoked the Lord to send his judgments upon the land, and which would provoke him to send judgments yet more intolerable. He speaks of "the pestilent smiting together of people, and hurling together of realms, because the honours of Holy Church are given to unworthy men; a mischief so heavy, that well will it be for that man who shall not then be alive." "Both vengeance of sword," he affirms, "and mischiefs unknown before, by which men in those days shall be punished, shall befall them, because of the sins of priests. Hence men shall fall upon them, and cast them out of their fat benefices; and shall say, He came into his benefice by his kindred, and this, by a covenant made before: he, for his worldly service, came into the Church, and this for money. Then, every such priest shall cry, alas! alas! that no good spirit dwelt with me, at my coming into the Church of God!" In those days, "men of Holy Church shall be despised as carrion; as dogs shall they be cast out in open places." In order, however, to comfort and support the righteous under the apprehension of such gloomy dispensations, he adds, in language which well became the Evangelic Doctor, "Jesus Christ entered into holy things, that is into Holy Church, by holy living and holy teaching; and with his blood he delivered man's nature; as Zechariah writeth in his ninth chapter,\* *Thou, verily, with the blood of thy witness, (or of thy testament,) hast let out from the pit them that were bound.* So, when we were sinful, and the children of wrath, God's Son came out of heaven, and, praying his Father for his enemies, he died for us. Then, much rather shall we be saved, now that we are made righteous by his blood. St. Paul writeth to the Romans,† that Jesus should pray for us, and that he went into heaven to appear in the presence of God for us. The same also, he writeth to the He-

\* Zech. ix. 11.

† Rom. viii. 34.



brews ; the which presence may He grant us to behold, who liveth and reigneth without end. Amen."\*

This attack upon ecclesiastical corruptions was but prelusive to more stubborn conflicts. Nothing seems to be better ascertained, in the history of Wiclif, than the fact, that about the year 1360. 1360 he was notorious for standing foremost in that warfare which had for some time been vigorously carried on against the Mendicant Orders ; and that his activity in the conflict first elevated him to that commanding rank, in the public estimation, which he never afterwards lost. The modern Roman Catholic historian has been pleased to describe this as a *ridiculous* controversy ; † a somewhat strange epithet for one of the most momentous contests in the history of the Church ! Ridiculous enough it unquestionably was, if considered purely with reference to the impudence, the hypocrisy, and the imposture, which it exposed ; but nothing could well be more grave and serious, if estimated by the shock which it inflicted on the fabric of the Papal power. The order of begging friars, it will be remembered, was established early in the preceding century, at a time when the opulence of the monastic establishments had converted most of them into huge "castles of indolence," into gigantic monuments of pride and sensuality, to which the enemies of superstition were perpetually pointing, when they were desirous of awakening the world to the duty of demolishing the abuses of the Church. The Papacy, thus environed by adversaries, and presenting to their assault such a multitude of vulnerable points, accepted with gladness the services of an Order, which promised to exhibit to the world an image

\* Vaughan, vol. i. p. 258, 259.

† "It was about the year 1360 that the name of Wiclif is first mentioned in history. He was then engaged in a *fierce but ridiculous* controversy with the various Orders of friars." Ling. vol. iv. p. 213.

of primitive simplicity and self-denial, and to emulate in austerity of demeanour, and contempt of wealth, the greatest champions of ecclesiastical reform. It was, further, perceived, that nothing could be more valuable to the Pontificate, than a body of auxiliaries, who would be armed by their vows of poverty, as with triple brass, against the power and the menaces of all secular potentates. The holy Church would thus be provided with a hardy and devoted militia, thoroughly prepared for all the various exigencies of her warfare. On the one hand, she would be effectually guarded against the hostility of princes, and, on the other, against the still more formidable encroachments of heresy. The most ample and honourable privileges were, accordingly, lavished on those fraternities which made a voluntary abjuration of property; and whose members were ready to disperse themselves throughout Christendom, relying for their support on the alms of the faithful, and, for their influence, on the example of an austere, laborious, and holy life.

For a considerable time, the new institution did its office to admiration. The effect was like the transfusion of fresh life-blood into a decaying system. The veins and arteries of the languishing monster seemed to swell with renovated life; and its energies went forth, once more, with a speed and impulse, which gave it a sort of omnipresence throughout Europe. The genius of the system penetrated, quickly, into every department of ecclesiastical enterprise and occupation, whether high or low, whether obscure or eminent. It intruded itself into the region of parochial duty; it seated itself in the confessional; it seized on the chair of the University; it grasped the crozier of episcopacy; it held the seals of civil office, and the portfolio of diplomatic intrigue; till, at last, it appeared probable that the confidence and veneration of nearly the whole Catholic world would be

The efficacy of the Mendicant Orders at their first institution.

transferred from their established guides, to these professors of primitive sanctity and perfection.

It was not to be expected that the secular clergy, or the ancient religious orders, would regard, without the bitterest jealousy, the reputation and the prosperity of their rivals: and, as might have been reasonably anticipated, symptoms of degeneracy began speedily to develop themselves among the new societies, and to animate both priest and monk with the hopes of a successful resistance to their power. In the first place, the distinguished honours heaped on

Enormous in the Mendicant system had enormously  
crease of the multiplied its numbers: and such was  
Mendicants.

the rapidity of this accumulation, that it threatened almost to overwhelm the power which had called it into existence. Accordingly, in 1272, Gregory X. found it necessary to repress these "*extravagant swarms*" of holy beggars, and to confine the institution to the four denominations of Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, and Hermits of St. Augustine. But the immoderate increase of their numbers was not the only circumstance which tended to impair the respect of the world for their itinerant

Their rapacity instructors. In the course of time these  
and turbulence. professors of poverty were often found transformed into prodigies of opulence. Men beheld with astonishment,\* that the barefooted brethren, to whom property was an accursed thing, which they were to *touch not, and handle not*, became gradually, by some strange legerdemain, the lords of stately

\* Matthew Paris, speaking of their turbulent and intrusive establishment of themselves at St. Edmund's Bury, in 1258, says—"hoc audientes universi, non poterant satis admirari quod tam sancti viri, qui spontaneam paupertatem elegerunt, contempto Dei timore, et tam reverendi martyris et hominum oblocutione, et privilegiorum et conservatorum tuitione, violenter illius nobilis Ecclesie statum perturbarent." And again, in reference to a similar irruption at Dunstable, in 1260, he observes,—"domicilla adeo sumptuosa construxerant, ut in oculis intuentium, tot sumptus subito effusi a pauperibus fratribus, paupertatem voluntariam professis, admirationem suscitarant." Math. Par. p. 830, and 845. Ed. 1684.

edifices, and ample revenues; and appeared in a fair way to rival the hierarchy in wealth, as effectually as they had rivalled them in authority and influence. And this manifest and shameless abandonment of the original spirit of their system, naturally provided their adversaries with another formidable ground for complaint and opposition.

It was in the year 1221 that these reformers first made their appearance in England, under the conduct of Gilbert de Fresney, who, with twelve Dominican brethren, obtained an establishment in Oxford. On their first arrival they enjoyed the patronage of, perhaps, the greatest ecclesiastical name of that age, the illustrious Bishop Grostete; who, however, lived to repent the encouragement he had lavished upon them, and to denounce them as the heaviest curse that could be inflicted on the cause of Christianity.\*

1221.  
Introduction of  
the Mendicants  
into England.

The system produced here, in full measure, the same effects which raised against it the voice of the rest of Europe. The monkish chronicles are filled with complaints of the rapacity, ambition, and turbulence, of the Mendicant Orders; and the furious animosities which broke out between these intruders and the ancient clergy, both secular and monastic, began to rouse the Christian world from their long and vexatious dream of spiritual inatuation. "It is a matter of melancholy presage," says Matthew Paris, "that, within the four and twenty years of their establishment in England, these friars have piled up their mansions to a royal altitude. Impudently transgressing the bounds of poverty, the very basis of their profession, they fulfil, to the letter, the ancient prophecies of Hildegard, and exhibit inestimable treasures within their spacious edifices, and

Its bad effects.

\* "God says that evil teachers been the cause of destruction of the people, and Grostete declares it well, and friars been the principal evil teachers; they been principal cause of destroying this world." Wiclif, against the Order of Friars, cap. 26.

lofty walls. They beset the dying bed of the noble and the wealthy, in order to extort secret bequests from the fears of guilt or superstition. No one now has any hope of salvation but through the ministry of the *preachers* or the *Minorites*. They are found at the court, in the character of counsellors, and chamberlains, and treasurers, and negociators of marriage. As the agents of Papal extortion, they are incessantly applying the arts of flattery, the stings of rebuke, or the terrors of confession. They pour contempt on the sound Orders of Benedict and Augustine; and, according to their estimate, the black-cowled brethren are as much superior to the monks, as the disciples of Epicurus would be to so many simpletons and boors.”\* —“With overbearing insolence, they frequently inquired of the devout, by whom they had been confessed? And if the answer was, by my own priest, they replied, and who is that *ignoramus*? He never heard lectures in theology; he never gave his nights to the study of the decrees; he never learned to unravel knotty questions. They are all blind, and leaders of the blind. Come to us, who know how to distinguish leper from leper.” The consequence of all this was, not only that the parochial clergy fell into contempt, but that their parishioners, no longer compelled to blush in the presence of their local ministers,† broke out into unbridled licentiousness. For thus (the chronicler informs us,) did they whisper to each other,—“Let us follow our own pleasure. Some one of the preaching brothers will soon travel this way,—one whom we never saw before, and never shall see again; so that, when we have had our will, we can confess without trouble or annoyance.” Such was the influence they derived from the patronage of the Pope, and the confidence of the people, that they were enabled to bid defiance to the power of the con-

\* Matth. Paris, p. 541. Ed. 1684.

† “—— Cum rubor et confusio in confessione pars sit maxima et potissima in penitentia.” Matth. Par. p. 608. Ed. 1684.

venual clergy, and sometimes to usurp their privileges, and even to appropriate their revenues: to the utter amazement of all thinking persons, who could not but wonder at such excesses of rapacity and insolence, exemplified by the *poor brethren*,—the holy professors of voluntary indigence.\* To fill up the measure of evil, it appears, that the country was, at last, so over-run by swarms of friars, and so disturbed by their disorders, that our ancient records are filled with warrants for the arrest of the sanctimonious vagrants.†

These abuses had become so intolerable, in the reign of Edward III., that, (as we have already seen,) in the year 1357, Richard Fitzralph, Archbishop of Armagh,‡ fearlessly arraigned the Mendicants before

Richard Fitzralph's opposition to the Mendicants.

\* Of this several instances are recorded by Math. Paris, 608. 830. 845. Ed. 1674. Ed. 1684.

† See Turner's *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 413, note (63.) which contains various references to such orders in the reigns of Henry III. Edward I. and Edward II. Among them is one general order to arrest them all over the kingdom: "*De religiosis vagabundis arrestandis per totum regnum.*"

‡ Some account has been given, in the preceding chapter, of this distinguished prelate, usually known by the title of *Armachanus*. The following is a portion of his Sermon against the Mendicants, which may serve as a specimen of the English spoken in those times:—

"Hereof cometh grete damage both to the peple, and to the clergie, also to the peple, for many men, for what they loveth best in this world, that is her own children. Also, hit is grete damage to the clergie, for now in the Universitees of the rewme of Englonde. For children beth so ystole from her fadres and modres, lewed men (*laymen*) in every place withholdeth her children, and sendeth hem nought to the Universite. For hem is lever (*more willing*) make hem erthe thyers, and have them, than sende hem to the Universite, and lose hem. So that ghet, in my tymes in the Universite of Oxenford were thritty thousand scholers at ones; and nowe beth unnethe six thousand. And me trowith, that the grittest occasioun why scholers beth so withdraw, hit is for children beth so begiled & ystole. And I see none gretter damage to all the clergie than this damage.

"And there is more great damage that undoth and distroyeth the seculars of all manner faculte, for those orders of beggers, for endelese wynnynges that thei getteth by beggyng of the forseide privyleges of schriftes and sepultures, and othere. Thei beth now so multiplied in coventes and in persons, that many men tellith that in general studies unnethe is yfounds to sillying a profitable book of the faculte of art, of dyvynyte, of law canon, of phisik, ether of law civile, but all bookes beth ybought of freres. So that in every covent is a noble librarie and a grete; so that

the Pope, at Avignon, and represented, among other causes of complaint, that their attempts to allure into their Order the youth at our Universities, had occasioned the most violent alarm, and had reduced the number of students at Oxford from 30,000 to 6,000. There can be no doubt that the exertions of Fitzralph were vigorously followed up by Wiclif. It may not, perhaps, be possible for us, at the present day, confidently to affix to any of his extant writings against them, a date so early as the year 1360. But then it should be remarked, once for all, that the works of the Reformer are extremely voluminous, and very much dispersed. It is but an inconsiderable portion of them that has ever appeared in print. The remainder are still in manuscript, and are scattered throughout the public libraries of the empire. We are by no means quite certain that the whole of them have been discovered; and it would be a task of extreme, perhaps, of hopeless difficulty, to ascertain the exact period of their composition or publication. It is, nevertheless, important and satisfactory to know, that the commencement of his labours in this cause has, with almost unanimous consent, been referred to this period by all the writers, whether friendly or adverse, who have mentioned his name. The pith and marrow of his controversy with these religionists, may be found in a small treatise "against the Orders of Friars," which was published by him full twenty years later, and in which his charges and objections are arranged under fifty distinct heads or chapters.\*

everich frere, that hath state in scole, such as thei beth now, hath an huge librarye. And also I sent of my sugettes to scole thre or foure persons; and hit is seide me that somme of hem beth come home agen, for thei myght nought fynde to sell oon gude bible, nother other covenable bookes. Hit semeth that herof schuld come siche an end, that no clergie should leve in holy chirche, but oonlich in freres, and so, the faith of holy chirche were loste, but oonlich in freres." See Turner's Hist. Engl. part vi. c. ii. p. 583, note 28.

\* This tract, together with his petition to the King and Parliament, was printed in a small volume at Oxford, in 1608, with the title,—"Two short treatises against the Orders of Begging Friars, compiled by that famous Doctour of the Church, and preacher of God's word, John Wic-

+ The remainder of his life, however, from the period of his first appearance against them, may, without much inaccuracy, be described as one continued protest against the iniquity of these Orders. He never seems to have lost sight of the subject. His indignant reprobation of their practices is prodigally scattered over his writings. To his latest breath, he never ceased to denounce them as the pests of society,—as the bitter enemies of all pure religion,—as monsters of arrogance, hypocrisy, and covetousness,—in short, as no other than the tail of the apocalyptic dragon, which was to sweep away a third part of the stars from the firmament of the Church.\*

+ The limits of this narrative forbid the introduction of a copious abstract of his treatise against the Friars. There is one of their practices, however, too remarkable to pass unnoticed here. The fifteenth of his objections charges them with deceiving and pillaging the people by their *Letters of Fraternity*, *Letters of fra-* which he describes as “powdred with ternity. hypocrisy, covetise, simonie, blasphemie, and other leasings.” These precious documents, it seems, were written on fine vellum, splendidly illuminated, under the seal of the fraternity, and covered with sarsnet: and they conveyed to the faithful and wealthy purchaser an assurance of his participation in the masses,

if, sometime fellow of Merton, and Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and afterwards Parson of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, faithfully printed according to two ancient copies, extant, the one in Benet College in Cambridge, the other remaining in the public library at Oxford.” At the end of the same volume is an Apology for John Wiclif, “shewing his conformity with the now Church of England, with answer to such slanderous objections as have been urged against him by Father Parsons, the Apologists, and others. Collected chiefly out of divers of works of his, in written hand, by God’s especial providence remaining in the public library at Oxford. By Thomas James, keeper of the same, 1608.” The heads of the fifty heresies or errors laid to the charge of the Mendicants by Wiclif, are given by Lewis, p. 22—30: and the Reformer says, in conclusion of his treatise, that there be “many moe, if men wold seek them well out;” and that the “Friars been cause, beginning and maintaining of perturbation in Christiandome, and of all evils of this worlde: and these errors shallen never be amended, til Friars be brought to Freedom of the Gospel, and clean religion of Jesu Christ.”

\* Rev. xii. 4.



vigils, and other religious exercises of the holy brotherhood, both during his life, and after his death. So that they provided the sinner, who was able to purchase them, with a sort of running dispensation, which always kept pace with the utmost speed of his transgressions. It should, however, be observed that this imposture does not appear to have been peculiar to the Mendicants. They practised it in common with other religious societies,\* though possibly with more shameless enormity; as Wiclif, indeed, very plainly intimates: for he says of them, that "they passen bishoppes, popes, and eke God himself. For *they* grant no pardon, but if [except] men be contrite and shriven, and of merite of Christ's passion, and other saints; but friars maken no mention, nether of contrition, ne shrift, ne merite of Christ's passion, but only of ther own good deeds."

It will easily be believed that by his exertions against the Mendicants, Wiclif was piling up for himself a formidable accumulation of wrath. It is not to be supposed that these Orders would passively endure any attack upon their privileges; especially as they were quite notoriously impatient of contradiction. For a time, their activity and perseverance seem to have only been augmented by opposition. To arrest the ruin with which their intrigues threatened the University of Oxford, a statute had been made, providing that none should be received into the Mendicant fraternities, until they should attain the age of eighteen years. But this enactment furnished but a weak defence against the pertinacity of the Friars. Their influence and their wealth were prodigally employed to defeat that salutary regulation: and dispensations were perpetually issuing from Rome, which almost reduced its provisions to a dead letter. The quar-

\* See Lewis, p. 24, note (r.) also p. 301, where a copy is given of one of these letters, granted by the convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, to the mother of the famous Dean Colet.

rel, accordingly, continued to rage with unabated violence; till, at length, in 1366, it was found expedient to submit it to the decision of the high Court of Parliament. The result Interference of Parliament.

of this application was, a grave and salutary recommendation, that the adverse parties should use each other with all becoming courtesy; and an injunction, that none of the Orders should receive among them any scholar under the age of eighteen years; that the Friars should take no advantage, nor procure any bull, or any other process from Rome, against the Universities; that all controversies between them should be referred to the Crown; and that all offenders should be punished at the pleasure of the King in Council. Even this measure, however, was insufficient to stop the tide of encroachment; as an instance of which, it may be mentioned, that nine years afterwards, a bull was actually procured by the Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury, to dispense, in their favour, with a statute of the University, requiring persons to be regents in arts before they proceeded doctors in divinity.\*

The energy of Wiclif, as the adversary of the Friars and the champion of the ancient institutions, probably recommended him to the Society of Baliol College, by whom he was presented, in 1361, with the church of Fillingham, a living of considerable value, in the diocese of Lincoln, and in the archdeaconry of Stow; which he afterwards exchanged, in 1368, for Lutgershall, in the archdeaconry of Bucks, a living of less value, but of more convenient situation, as being nearer to Oxford. In the same year (1361) he was promoted to the wardenship of Baliol; which dignity he resigned some four years afterwards, for the head-

1361.  
Wiclif presented to the rectory of Fillingham.

which he afterwards exchanged for Lutgershall, in 1368.

1361.  
Promoted to the wardenship of Baliol College.

\* Lewis, p. 5, 6. Cotton's Abridgement, p. 102, 103. Collier, i. 560.

1365.  
Wiclif appointed to the headship of Canterbury Hall, founded by Archbishop Islep.

ship of Canterbury Hall, a society founded about that time by Simon Islep, then Archbishop of Canterbury. This prelate was renowned for his generous attachment to learning, and for the salutary vigilance, and even rigour, of his ecclesiastical administration. The selection of Wiclif, by such a man, for the presidentship of his new foundation, must have been a signal and very gratifying honour; which, however, he might possibly have been almost tempted to decline, had he foreseen the turmoil and conflict in which his promotion would involve him. The foundation of Canterbury Hall, it should be observed, was designed for a warden and eleven scholars, eight of whom were to be secular clergymen, the remaining four members, including the warden, were to be monks of Christ Church, Canterbury. The office of warden was first conferred on one Wodehall, a turbulent and intractable monk, who had already molested and disquieted the university, by the disorderly violence of his temper.\* In 1365, for reasons which are not distinctly known,—but probably in consequence of the dissensions occasioned by a mixture of secular and monastic scholars in the same institution,—the founder removed Wodehall and his three monks, and substituted in their place John Wiclif as warden, and three secular clerks, William Selby, William Middleworth, and Richard Benger, to be scholars: and this change he is said to have effected by virtue of a clause in the instrument of foundation, reserving to himself and his successors, the power of removing the warden at pleasure, in a summary manner, without process or form of law.† In 1366, Islep died, and was suc-

\* See Lewis, p. 11, 12.

† "Absque judiciali strepitu." These are the words quoted by Lewis, but he does not give the context in which they occur. Neither can I find this provision in the appendix to the first volume of Vaughan, in which he professes to give all the documents which relate to this case. Dr. Lingard does not hesitate to affirm that we are not acquainted with the

ceeded by Simon Langham, who was originally a private monk, and afterwards abbot of Westminster; from which office he was promoted to the bishopric of Ely, and thence, by papal provision, to the primacy. It is not very surprising that one whose discipline and life had been among the religious Orders, should be found ready to entertain an appeal against a secular warden of Canterbury Hall. The appointment of Wiclif to that office, by Simon Islep, had been made in language which bore most honourable testimony to his fitness for the post. It was, nevertheless, suggested that this appointment had taken place when Islep was disabled, by infirmity, for the transaction of business; and that it was, moreover, contrary to the charter of foundation. On this ground, the appointment of Wiclif was pronounced void by Langham, and one John de Radyngate substituted in his place. The new president, however, held his situation but a very short time; for, the very next month, Wodehall was restored to the wardenship; and on Wiclif's refusal to render obedience to this order, the Archbishop sequestered the revenues of the Hall. Against this sentence of his metropolitan, Wiclif appealed to the Pope; a proceeding from which it may be collected that he had not in his mind, at that time, any settled scheme of opposition to the Papal supremacy over the ecclesiastical affairs of Europe. A tedious process of between three and four years followed. The Papal decree at last came forth, and not only ratified the proceedings of Langham, but in defiance and contempt of the provisions of the original foundation, pronounced that *none but monks*, had any right "to remain perpetually" in Canterbury Hall; that all the secular scholars should

His appointment pronounced void by Archbishop Langham.

Wiclif appeals to the Pope.

who ratifies Langham's decree.

means by which Wodehall was superseded by Wiclif: but he does not question that he and his monks were removed with the approbation of the founder. Lingard, vol. iv. p. 214, 215.

be removed; that Henry Wodehall, and the other deprived monks, should be restored; and that perpetual silence should be imposed on Wiclif, and the ejected secular clerks.

The decision confirmed by the crown. Notwithstanding this decision, the regulars seem to have felt their title and possession insecure, until it had been fortified by the royal approbation; and this was not obtained until the year 1372. In this remarkable instrument,\* it is distinctly recited, that the royal license was originally granted for an establishment, the members of which were to be *partly* secular and *partly* religious; that this license was first violated by Islep's substitution of seculars *exclusively*; and that it was again violated by the Papal decree, which transferred the institution *exclusively* to monks. On this it became a question, whether the Hall itself, together with its whole endowment, were not forfeited to the king, of whom the advowson of Pageham, the chief source of its revenue, was held *in capite*. To remedy this doubt, it was thought absolutely necessary to have recourse to the royal confirmation of the Pope's sentence; and the instrument, accordingly proceeds to state, that "in consideration of 200 marks paid by the Prior and Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury," (from which the monkish members were always to be elected) "all transgressions and forfeitures were pardoned, and the Papal decree ratified and confirmed." On the face of this document, therefore, it appears, that even if the charter of foundation was first violated by Islep,† it was equally violated afterwards by the court of

\* It is printed at length in Lewis, p. 297—301, from the MS. at Lambeth. No. 104.

† So far as the removal of the warden, and the substitution of Wiclif are concerned, it is doubtful whether the royal license had been violated by Archbishop Islep. There certainly was no such violation of it, if, as Lewis asserts, it reserved to the founder the right of removing the warden at pleasure, in a summary way, *absque judiciali strepitu*. See Lewis, p. 19. note.

Rome; but that the latter breach of the royal license was cured by a substantial bribe to the Crown, amounting in value to between 2000 and 3000 pounds of our present money.

That Wiclif should be indignant at the iniquity of a transaction, so disgraceful both to the court of Rome and to the court of London, may very readily be imagined: and to his disappointment at the decision, some have not scrupled to attribute (*perhaps rashly*, according to the confession of a recent historian\*) his subsequent opposition to the Papal authority. From a consideration of the following circumstances, it may reasonably be collected that something far more discreditable than *rashness* may be ascribed to those, who have attributed the conduct of Wiclif to any such unworthy feelings. In the first place, not the slightest allusion to the subject has yet been found in any portion of his writings. So far as they have yet been examined, they furnish not a fragment of evidence to prove that the matter dwelt upon his mind, or raised a spark of worldly or factious resentment. It may be true, (as it is most needlessly, and not very charitably, remarked by a Protestant historian of the Church,) that "there was not *much of the cross* in this disappointment."† But it should be remembered, that Wiclif never set up for a martyr upon the strength of that disappointment, and never was known to raise an outcry against the sentence. It is allowed by the same writer, that he suffered in a righteous cause; and this is, probably, all that Wiclif would have claimed for himself; and is, assuredly, all that has been claimed for him by his most favourable historians. In the next place it must be recollected, that his deep sense of ecclesiastical abuse and corruption had, long before, found utterance in his tract on the Last Age of the Church, published in 1356. There is, furthermore, the strongest

\* Lingard, vol. iv. p. 215

† Milner's Church History, vol. iv. p. 110.

reason for believing that he had openly committed himself to decided hostilities against the Romish militia,—the Mendicant Orders,—previously to the commencement of the dispute relative to the wardenship of Canterbury Hall, (although there may be no extant writing of his on this subject, to which so early a date can, with absolute certainty, be assigned;) and that these hostilities were continued, with unabated vigour, even while the appeal to Rome was pending. But the most triumphant defence of Wiclif from the charge either of vindictive selfishness, or of a worldly and calculating spirit, is to be found in his conduct relative to the Papal claim of sovereignty over the realm of England, about that time revived by Pope Urban the Fifth.

It will, of course, be recollected, that the foundation for this claim was the surrender of the British crown by King John to Pope Innocent the Third. Nothing, perhaps, could have occurred to scatter more widely, among the people of England, the seeds of disaffection towards the Papal tyranny, than this most ignominious transaction. That the submission rendered to it both by the monarch and the people was, in all succeeding times, bitterly reluctant, may be concluded from the fact, that the humiliating formality of homage was constantly evaded, and that, since the days of Henry III. the odious tribute of 1,000 marks was often interrupted. In 1365, no less

1365.

The Pope re-  
vives his claim  
of homage and  
tribute from  
England.

than thirty-three years had elapsed since the last payment had been made; and then, in evil hour, when the spirit of the nation was at its highest, the Pope thought him of demanding the arrears, and, with them, the due performance of feudal homage. On failure to comply, King Edward the Third,—the conqueror of France, the hero of the age, the mirror of chivalry—was apprised that he would be cited by process to appear at the Papal court, there to answer for the default to his civil and spiritual

sovereign. The conduct of that monarch on this occasion was precisely such as became a King of England. He laid the insolent exactions of the Pontiff before his Parliament the next year, (1366,) and desired their advice on the emergency. The answer of the lords spiritual and temporal, and of the Commons of England to this demand of their sovereign, is such as, even at this distance of time, we can hardly read without feeling our hearts burn within us. "Forasmuch as neither king John, nor any other king, could bring this realm and kingdom in such thralldom and subjection, but by common consent of Parliament, the which was not done; therefore, that which he did was against his oath at his coronation. If, therefore, the Pope should attempt any thing against the king by process, or other matters in deed, the king, with all his subjects, should, with all their force and power, resist the same."

Edward III.  
lays the demand before  
Parliament,  
who resolve  
that it ought to  
be resisted.

This solemn legislative renunciation of servitude and vassalage, must have smitten with sore amazement the faithful adherents of Pontifical supremacy. Their displeasure was speedily expressed by the pen of an anonymous monk, who immediately on the promulgation of the above resolutions, published a vindication of the Papal claims, in which he challenged Wiclif, by name, to confute his arguments in support of those pretensions, and to maintain the recent decision of the Parliament. What then is the irresistible inference from the bare fact of such a challenge, but that Wiclif was, at that time, publicly known as the avowed and determined adversary of Papal encroachment,—as the champion, whom of all others, an advocate of the Romish power would be most anxious to overthrow? The case, therefore, stands, simply, thus. In 1365, Wiclif appeals to Rome against his ejection from the wardenship of Can-

Wiclif chal-  
lenged to defend  
the resolution of  
Parliament.



terbury Hall: in 1367, *while his suit is pending*, he is publicly challenged to defend the independence of his country against Popish usurpation,—a challenge which he promptly answers; and in 1370, the Pope decides against him, by a final sentence of deprivation. Where, then, shall we find language to describe the *rashness* of the surmise, that he was driven to extremities against the Papal authority, by his exasperation at the judgment which finally thrust him from his preferment?

The performance of his monkish antagonist has not been preserved; his <sup>1367.</sup> *Wiclif's reply* to it is, however, extant,\* in the <sup>to the challenge.</sup> form of a theological "determination" in Latin; and we may collect from it that the first object of his adversary was to render Wiclif personally odious at Rome, and thus to prejudice the suit then pending, and to ruin his future professional fortunes; the second to secure for himself and his Order the patronage of the Papal court; and the last, to establish the Papal power in more unlimited license, and consequently, to effect a more shameless accumulation of secular domains upon the religious houses.† Undeterred by any regard for his own personal interests, Wiclif addresses himself to the demolition of the main strength of his antagonist, which he finds to be collected in the following notable syllogism. "All dominion, granted under a condition, is, by the violation of the condition dissolved. But the Lord Pope granted to our king the realm of England, under the condition that England should annually pay 700 marks,‡ which condition has from time to time been

\* It is printed by Lewis, p. 349—360, by the title of "Determinatio quædam Magistri Johannis Wycliff, de Dominio; contra unum Monachum."

† "Tres causæ dictæ sunt mihi, cur homo facit. Primo, ut persona mea, sic ad Romanam Curiam diffamata, et aggravatis censuris, ab ecclesiasticis beneficiis sit privata. Secundo, ut ex hinc sibi et suis benevolentia Romanæ Curie sit reportata. Et tertio, ut, dominante Domino Papâ regno Angliæ, liberius, copiosius, et voluptuosius, sine freno correctionis fraternæ, sint Abbathiis civilia dominia cumulata." Lewis, p. 351.

‡ 700 for England, 300 for Ireland.

disregarded. Therefore, the king of England has long since fallen from the sovereignty of England." It required no great logical sagacity to discover that this argument began by virtually assuming the principal matter in debate; namely, that the condition was such as one of the high contracting parties had power lawfully to impose, or the other to accept. All, therefore, that remained for Wiclif to do, was to show that the condition in question was utterly intolerable. To this object he addresses himself with a somewhat ironical gravity. He professes, for his part, to be a humble and obedient son of the Romish Church, and protests that he is unwilling to make any assertion which may sound injuriously to her honour, or inflict reasonable offence on pious ears. He, therefore, conceives it to be more becoming in him to refer the Reverend Doctor, his antagonist, to the solution of the question which he had heard to have been given in a certain assembly of secular lords: and he, accordingly, proceeds to detail the sentiments there expressed by these illustrious counsellors. The first of them, he tells us, declared that tribute could be due only by right of conquest, and that it should be altogether refused unless the Pope could extort it by strength of hand; which if his Holiness should attempt he (the speaker) would resist in defence of our right. By the next of these senators it was observed, that the Pope ought to be foremost in the following of Christ, who had not where to lay his head: that by the nature of his office, he was absolutely incapacitated for receiving any such impost as he now demanded: that it was their duty to confine the Pope to the observance of his spiritual function, and, consequently, to resist the exaction of civil homage or tribute. If, said the third debater, the Pope be the *servant of the servants of God*, nothing but the performance of service can entitle him to any payment. Service, however, whether temporal or spiritual, we have received none, at the hand of

his Holiness. His demand of payment must consequently fall, at once, to the ground. A third part, or more, of the land of this kingdom, said the fourth nobleman, is held in mortmain by the Church; that is, by the Pope, who claims to be Lord of all the possessions of the Church. It follows, then, that he must hold these lands either as tenant and vassal of the king, or else as his liege lord and superior. That the king can have any territorial superior within this realm is contrary to the spirit of all feudal institutions; since, even when lands are granted in mortmain, the rights of the original lord are invariably reserved. The Pope, therefore, must be the king's vassal; and, having continually failed to render homage and service, has unquestionably incurred the forfeiture appropriate to such default. On what ground was it, demands the fifth speaker, that this impost was granted by King John? Was it for the benefit of personal absolution granted to himself, or for the removal of the interdict laid upon his kingdom, or for any forfeiture incurred by the monarch? If for either of the two former reasons, the transaction was basely simoniacal and iniquitous. It was simoniacal,—for it savoureth not of the religion of Christ to say, I will absolve thee on condition that you pay me so much monies annually and for ever. It was grossly iniquitous,—for what could be more shameful than to burden the unoffending people with a penalty due only to the sins of the monarch? But if this mark of servitude were imposed for the last of the above reasons, it must follow that the Pope would, in the most formidable of all senses, be the liege lord of our king. He might, for any pretended forfeiture, and at any time, pluck the crown from the head of our sovereign, and place it on the brow of a creature of his own! And who, adds the speaker, is to resist the beginnings of such encroachments, if we do not? The goods of the Church, said another, cannot be lawfully alienated without an adequate and reason-

able consideration. It is, therefore, quite monstrous that the Pope should pretend to dispose of a realm so broad and rich for a paltry rent of 700 marks a year. Besides, if there is to be any sovereign lord of this land, above the king, that lord must be no other than Christ himself. The Pope it cannot be; for the Pope is liable to sin: and, according to the doctors of theology, by actually incurring mortal sin, would forfeit all title to dominion. Enough, therefore, it is for us to keep ourselves from mortal sin, and virtuously to share our possessions with the poor, in token of our holding them immediately of Christ, the only sure and all-sufficient liege Lord, instead of acknowledging ourselves dependent on one whose own title must be constantly open to failure and defeat. It was very forcibly urged by the last of these speakers, that an improvident stipulation of the king, the result of his own judicial infatuation, and affecting the rights and interests of a whole people, could never be held perpetually binding, unless confirmed by the formal and solemn acquiescence of all orders and estates of the realm. Such plenitude of authority and consent was, in this instance, wanting; the whole transaction, therefore, must be utterly illegitimate and void. From these considerations, thus solemnly urged by the secular counsellors of the nation, Wiclif conceives himself entitled to conclude, that the condition imposed by the Pope, and accepted by king John, was altogether "a vain thing;" and he commends to his reverend adversary the task of proving it to be otherwise. "But if I mistake not," he adds in conclusion; "the day will first arrive in which every exaction shall cease, before the doctor will be able to establish that a stipulation, such as this, can ever be consistent either with honesty or with reason."

It is not, perhaps, very easy to decide, whether Wiclif is here to be considered as reporting the substance of a debate which had actually taken place in

the House of Peers, relative to the demands of the Pope,\* or whether he is merely putting into the mouths of fictitious and imaginary speakers, such arguments, as would naturally suggest themselves to intelligent, high-spirited, and patriotic men. But, however this may be, it has been the pleasure of a living historian† to pronounce, that this "Determination" of the Reformer, "does more honour to his loyalty as a subject, than to his abilities as a scholar or a divine." His abilities, it may frankly be conceded, are not displayed to much advantage in this piece, considered as a specimen of artificial rhetoric, or finished composition. The style, it must be allowed, is sufficiently barbarous and rugged, and the Latinity such as to inflict severe penance on *Ciceronian* ears,—a circumstance not very surprising, when it is remembered, that, in those days, the graces of a classic style were little cultivated, and, indeed, scarcely known. If, however, the performance is to be estimated by its fitness to produce the desired impression on the public mind, it will assuredly be found not more honourable to his loyalty, than to his capacity and address. With a view to the purposes contemplated by him, we can scarcely imagine a happier form than that into which he has thrown the multiplied objections to these intolerable claims. It must have elated the very soul of any loyal Englishman to hear the reasonings by which the first men in the kingdom hurled back in the teeth of the Pontiff his pretensions to sovereignty over their native land. Every individual, with a grain of common sense in his head, or a spark of patriotism and religion in his heart, must have felt his blood warmed by these noble pledges of resistance to foreign arrogance and

\* It is clear that he does not pretend to have been present at the discussion. His words are, "—transmitto Doctorem meum reverendum ad solutionem hujus argumenti, *quam audiivi* in quodam Concilio a Dominis Secularibus esse datam. Primus autem Dominus, in armis plus strenuus, fertur taliter respondisse, &c. &c." Lewis, p. 351.

† Lingard, vol. iv. p. 215, note 194.

usurpation. On such an occasion, and for such objects, what could the scholar and the divine,—the peculiar clerk and chaplain to the king,\*—do better, than throw aside for a time, the person of a mere professional disputant, and appeal to the understanding of his readers in the language of senators and of statesmen?

It is further asserted by the same writer, that this paper "is chiefly remarkable for containing the germ of those doctrines, which afterwards involved Wiclif in so much trouble, namely, that dominion is founded in grace, and that the clergy ought not to hold temporal possessions."† With regard to the absurd and pernicious doctrine, that dominion is founded on grace, there is but one allusion to it in the whole document. It occurs in the argument of the sixth speaker; and there it appears in the form of an appeal to principles, which were admitted by the theological doctors of the age.‡ That the temporal endowments of the Church were destitute of all sanction, either from primitive example, or from the spirit and design of Christ's religion, is, it must be acknowledged, a doctrine distinctly and uniformly maintained by Wiclif. But a candid perusal of his "Determination" must show, that this was not the only, and certainly not the strongest ground, on which he resisted the claim of any Ecclesiastic, however exalted, to extort tribute from a foreign country. As these points will occasionally meet us again in the course of this narrative, it may be proper to seize the opportunity of remarking, that the opinions of Wiclif, relative to ecclesiastical property, appear to have been carried to a point, which lay very far be-

\* So he describes himself in his *Determination*: "Ego cum sim *peculiaris Regis Clericus*, talis qualis, volo libenter induere habitum responsalis, defendendo et suadendo quod Rex potest justè dominari regno Angliæ, negando tributum Romano Pontifici."

† Lingard, vol. iv. p. 215, note 194.

‡ Papa, dum fuerit in peccato mortali, *secundum theologos*, caret dominio. Lewis, p. 354.

X yond the limits of moderation. It is fit that the reader should be prepared for this: and it is likewise fit that his attention should be fixed on the causes which often drove the Reformer to a dangerous audacity of statement, in his discussions of this subject. It should never be forgotten, that he lived in days when the possessions of the Papal hierarchy had reached a most portentous magnitude, and had converted the Romish priesthood, for the most part, into a corrupt and indolent aristocracy. It has been computed, that more than half \* the landed property of this kingdom was then in their hands; and nothing but the Statute of Mortmain had prevented a still further absorption of it. Now it is one of the curses inflicted on mankind by flagrant and inveterate abuse, that the momentum required for its overthrow is such as frequently to carry the assailant forward, beyond the boundaries of wisdom and of safety. If, therefore, the principles or the reasonings of the Reformer, respecting the worldly affluence of the clergy, should be thought to savour of rashness or extravagance, a substantial apology may be found in the ruinous enormity of those evils, which called him forth to a life of incessant, perilous, and spirit-stirring conflict.

\* It is stated that there were in England 53,215 *feoda militum*; of which the religious had 28,000,—more than half! See Turner's History of England, vol. II. p. 413, note 64.

## CHAPTER IV.

1367—1377.

*Petition of Parliament that Ecclesiastics should not hold offices of State—Answer of the King—Probable effect of Wiclif's writings and opinions respecting this question—His sentiments on the employment of the Clergy in secular offices—He becomes a Doctor of Divinity, and is raised to the Divinity Chair at Oxford—His Exposition of the Decalogue—Notice of his "Pore Caitif"—Notice of the struggles of this Country against Papal exaction—Papal Provisions—Statute of Provisors, and of Premunire—Wiclif sent as Ambassador to the Pope—Presented to the Prebend of Aust and the Rectory of Lutterworth—Remonstrance of the "Good Parliament" against the Extortions of the Pope—Wiclif summoned to appear before the Convocation at St. Paul's—He is protected by John of Gaunt—His appearance at St. Paul's—The tumultuous scene which followed—Death of Edward III., and accession of Richard II.—Further complaints of the Parliament against the Pope—Question, "whether the treasure of the kingdom might not be detained, although required by the Pope," referred to Wiclif—His answer.*

NOTHING is clearly or positively known respecting the life, the studies, and the pursuits of Wiclif, during the interval which elapsed between his intrepid vindication of the independence of his country, and the year 1371, which was memorable for another assault upon the honours and privileges of Churchmen. In that year, a petition was presented by <sup>1371.</sup> the Parliament to the King, requesting the exclusion of ecclesiastical persons from offices of State, which, at that time, were almost entirely engrossed by the clergy, conformably to a practice which had generally prevailed in Europe, ever since the conversion of the western nations to the Christian faith. Every one, who has the slightest acquaintance with the state of society in the darker ages of Europe, is in full possession of the apology which may reasonably be offered



for a usage which, in theory, it might, perhaps, be difficult to defend. In those times, learning and intelligence were, in a great measure, confined to ecclesiastics. Throughout many a generation, it would have been vain to seek among the laity for persons qualified for the execution of functions requiring the most elementary of those accomplishments, which are now diffused almost throughout every class of the community. The coarse and ignorant heroes of the feudal ages positively gloried in their utter destitution of all "clerk-like" qualifications. To write and read\* were regarded by them as despicable vanities, which dishonoured a warrior, and degraded him to the level of a monk.\* With the capricious inconsistency which often marks the semibarbarian, they cherished a feeling of disdain for arts, the want of which kept them in a state of humiliation, and placed them at the mercy of a profession alternately the object of their derision and their fears. So long as this habit of thought or feeling prevailed, the highest secular responsibilities would, naturally and unavoidably, devolve upon the sacerdotal orders. In the fourteenth century, however, these days of ignorance and weakness were evidently passing away. The monstrous anomaly of consigning the offices of judicature, and the cares of State, to a class of persons, whose function pledged them to the guardianship of man's spiritual and eternal interests, was *beginning* to undergo a severe and unsparing scrutiny. The world were no longer content to see both Church and State placed under the control of the mitre and the cowl. It was no longer thought an ordinance of Nature or of Providence, that the seals

\* Every reader will at once call to mind the words of the Douglas in *Marmion*:

— by heaven it liked me ill  
When the king praised his clerikly skill.  
Thanks to St. Bothan, son of mine,  
Save Gawain, ne'er could pen a line.  
So said I, and so say I still,  
Let my boy Bishop fret his fill.

of judicial or political office should be borne by spiritual dignitaries. People began to think it strange that the Chancery and the Exchequer should be occupied by functionaries who were ordained to a ministry abhorrent from secular chicanery and litigation. Still less could they comprehend the profane abuse which consigned the care of royal wardrobes, or buildings, to ecclesiastical surveyors, or placed the kitchen and the larder under the control of a ghostly clerk!

These usages, however, like a multitude of others which had been almost consecrated by superstitious habit, retreated but very slowly before the advancing intelligence of the age. In the present instance, the answer of the King was, that he would deal with the petition of Parliament con- <sup>Answer of the King.</sup> formably to the advice of his council. His advisers, it would seem, did not venture to recommend an entire disregard of this popular feeling; for, in the course of a few weeks, the celebrated William of Wykeham resigned the great seal, and the Bishop of Exeter retired from the office of treasurer. This success, however, was but partial and temporary. Little permanent impression was made by it on the obnoxious practice,\* which continued, with slight interruption, till nearly the middle of the seventeenth century. Of the ecclesiastics who sat in the Court of Chancery, Bishop Williams was the last. Of clerical statesmen and prime ministers no instance occurs subsequently to that of Laud, who, probably, owed his ruin, in a

\* The same tendency in the Clergy to desecrate themselves by every species of secular occupation is denounced, more than a century and a half later, by old Latimer, with his usual bluntness. "It is to be lamented that the prelates, and other spiritual persons, will not attend upon their offices. They will not be among their flocks, but will, rather, run hither and thither, here and there, where they are not called, and, in the mean season, leave them at adventure, of whom they take their living. Yea, and furthermore, some would rather be *clerks of the kitchen*, or take other offices upon them besides that which they have already. But, with what conscience these same do so, I cannot tell!" *Sermons*, p. 171, quoted in Vaughan, vol. I. p. 317, note 22.

considerable measure, to the jealousy and disgust occasioned by his supposed intrusion into the political councils of his sovereign. So inveterate, however, was this practice, that, when he retired from the management of the treasury, he seemed still to be utterly unconscious that the fiscal office was unfit for a churchman, and accordingly laboured to procure it for Bishop Juxon; and he expressed the highest satisfaction when he succeeded in transferring it to such able and upright administration. Since that time, no high political function has, in this kingdom, been entrusted to an ecclesiastic. On the continent, the usage survived considerably longer.

If it be asked how we are to connect this petition of the Commons, with the history of Wiclif, it may, perhaps, be difficult to furnish a perfectly conclusive answer. The want of certainty as to the dates of

Probable effect of Wiclif's writings and opinions respecting this question.

his multifarious writings, may render it next to impossible, at the present day, to estimate correctly the influence of his labours on that public feeling which expressed itself in this proceeding. Thus much, however, is clear; that the language and tenor of that petition, were in full accordance with the sentiments to which he has given utterance in a variety of his extant compositions. It is, moreover, quite indisputable, that, at this period, he was no obscure and cloistered speculator. So long ago as the year 1356, as we have already seen, he committed himself to an open assault on the worldliness and ambition of the Romish hierarchy; about the year 1360, he was renowned for his prominent share in the controversy with the Mendicants; and in 1367, or 1368, he had further pledged himself to the conflict against Papal usurpation, by vindicating the resistance of the Parliament to the claims of tribute. These considerations, combined with the notorious spirit and tenor of all his publications, may reasonably warrant the conclusion, that his opinions were power-

fully instrumental in giving strength to the impulse, which in 1371, was carrying the public mind forward in the direction of improvement. This inference derives much confirmation, from the circumstance that Fox, the Martyrologist, does not appear to entertain the slightest doubt, that Wiclif is alluded to\* by one of our ancient chroniclers, who ascribes to *heretical* counsels, the measures adopted, about this time, to the disadvantage of the clergy; and who very gravely denounces those proceedings as the sins which called down upon the king the troubles and reverses of his latter days! That the measure now under consideration, was in strict harmony with the convictions of Wiclif, will sufficiently appear from the following extracts from his writings. The treatise termed "the Regimen of the Church," (which, if not Wiclif's own composition, is most probably a compilation from his writings) almost echoes the language of the Parliament. "Neither Prelates," he contends, "nor Doctors, nor Deacons, should hold secular offices, that is, those of Chancery, Treasury, Privy Seal, and other such secular offices in the Exchequer; neither be Land-stewards nor Stewards of Hall, nor *Clerks of Kitchen*, nor Clerks of Accounts; neither be occupied in any secular office in Lords' Courts; more especially while secu-

Sentiments of Wiclif, on the employment of the clergy in secular offices.

\* "It appeareth," says Fox, "by such as have observed the order and course of times, that this Wiclif flourished about the year of our Lord 1371, Edward the Third reigning in England. For thus we do find in the Chronicles of Caxton: 'In the year of our Lord 1371,' saith he, 'Edward the third, King of England, in his Parliament, was against the Pope's Clergy. He willingly harkened and gave ear to the *voices and tales of heretikes*, with certain of his Counsell, conceiving and following sinister opinions against the Clergie. Wherefore, afterward, he tasted and suffered much adversity and trouble. And not long after, in the year of our Lord,' saith he, '1372, he wrote unto the Bishop of Rome, that he should not, by any means, intermeddle any more within his kingdom, as touching the reservation, or distribution of benefices; and that all such Bishops as were under his dominion, should enjoy their former and ancient libertie, and be confirmed of their metropolitanes, as hath been accustomed in times past.' Thus much writeth Caxton." Fox's Acts and Monuments, in Wordsworth's Eccles. Biography, vol. i. p. 5, 6.

lar men are able to do such offices."\* The inconsistency of such occupations with the spiritual function, is exposed by reference to the authority of St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, and St. Jerome, and of the apostolic decrees. He further appeals to the language of St. Paul to the Corinthian Church, and to the admonition of our Lord, addressed to his disciples. In another of his compositions, he complains that "prelates, and great religious professioners are so occupied in heart about worldly lordships, and with pleas of business, that no habit of devotion, of praying, of thoughtfulness on heavenly things, on the sins of their own heart, or those of other men, may be preserved; neither may they be found studying and preaching of the Gospel, nor visiting and comforting of poor men." And the miserable effect of this desertion of their sacred ministry, he describes to be, that the churchmen, who are suffered to become "rich clerks of Chancery, of the Common Bench, and King's Bench, and the Exchequer, and Justices, and Sheriffs, and Stewards, and Bailiffs,"† contract, at last, such habits of worldliness, as must utterly disqualify them for rebuking, with authority, the worldliness of other people. And, accordingly, in the complaint preferred by him, several years later, to the King and Parliament, he says, "our Priests ben so busy about worldly occupations, that they see men better bailiffs, or reves, than ghostly Priests of Jesu Christ." Such was the prevalence of this admixture of sacred and profane employments, that it would seem to have had not only the sanction of the Crown, but the approbation and

\* For this and the following extract, I am indebted to the diligence of Mr. Vaughan. See vol. i. p. 314. The passage quoted above is from the *Ecclesias Regimen*. Cotton MSS. Titus, D. i. There is a second copy of this Treatise among the MSS. of Trinity College, Dublin; which, however, was mislaid when Mr. Vaughan wished to examine it.

† This passage is taken from a MS. in C. C. C. Cambridge, beginning with the words,—“For three skills [reasons] lords should constrain Clerks to live in meekness, poverty, and ghostly travail.” Vaughan, vol. i. p. 314.

encouragement of the lay patrons; who are represented by the Reformer as diverting clerks from their holy calling, by appointing them to hold "vain offices in their courts," and thus deterring the more conscientious among them from accepting spiritual benefices.\* It would be needless to ransack his writings for further extracts, in condemnation of such degrading usages. Sentiments similar to those which have been here produced, are, doubtless, scattered in profusion over his works: and although we may be unable to assign the exact time at which he began publicly to reprobate these particular abuses, it would be absurd to hesitate in reckoning his influence as among the most powerful agencies, which were then at work to purify the Church from this species of desecration.

The year 1372 was memorable for Wiclif's promotion to the degree of doctor of divinity, and for his elevation to the theological chair of Oxford. At the time of his advancement to this commanding position, he was in the maturity and autumn of his life, having then numbered about eight-and-forty years. It is probable that many of his scholastic exertations, of which a considerable number is still extant, were delivered in the regular course of his professional duty: and, if no other monument of his powers had been preserved to us, there would, perhaps, be little, which should tempt posterity to disturb the dust which ages might heap upon his volumes,—little which would make good his peculiar claim to the title of Evangelic Doctor. His whole life, however, showed that he brought with him to his new station a much loftier ambition, than that of merely enlarging or fortifying the barren domain of metaphysical abstraction. The fashion of the age, indeed, and the very nature of his office, must fre-

1372.

Wiclif becomes  
doctor of divinity,  
and is raised  
to the divinity  
chair at Oxford.

\* In his tract on the question, "Why poor Priests have no benefices."

quently have demanded such exhibitions of his learning and acuteness. At this day, they will, perhaps, be regarded as little better than a mere waste of his abilities ; but it should never be forgotten, that they did substantial, though indirect, service to the cause of scriptural truth, since they advanced his reputation, and greatly augmented the weight and authority of his opinions. That his thoughts, however, were not diverted by his elevation from the *weightier matters* of Christian theology, will appear from his copious Exposition of the Decalogue, a treatise which may, with considerable probability, be referred to this period of his life. A plain scriptural statement of the laws of the two tables, in the English tongue, may seem to us no mighty achievement for so renowned a doctor. In those times, however, there can be no doubt, such a work was a phenomenon of great rarity and vast importance. He himself tells us in his preface, that it was, then, no uncommon thing for men "to call God Master, forty, three-score, or four-score years ; and yet to remain ignorant of his Ten Commandments." And when the Commandments were known, the priestcraft of the age was, generally, at hand, to point out some *refuge of lies*, in which the transgressor might be safe from the penalty. To lay the Divine law before the world in all its purity, and all its sovereignty was, in such an age, one of the noblest services which a teacher could render to the Church. The world must have been startled, as at the clang of the trumpet, to hear, as it were, from the chair of divinity, such words as these : "Covet not thy neighbour's goods, despise him not, slander him not, deceive him not, scorn him not, belie him not, backbite him not ; the which is a common custom now-a-days ; and so, in all other things, do no otherwise than thou wouldst reasonably that he did to thee. But many think if they give a penny to a pardoner, they shall be forgiven the breaking of all

Wiclif's Exposition of the Decalogue.

the commandments of God, and therefore they take no heed how they keep them. *But I say to thee for certain*, though thou have priests and friars to sing for thee, and though thou each day hear many masses, and found chantries and colleges, and go on pilgrimages all thy life, and give all thy goods to pardoners: all this shall not bring thy soul to heaven. While, if the commandments of God are revered to the end, though neither penny nor half-penny be possessed, there shall be everlasting pardon and bliss of heaven." From the following extract it will appear, that at this period, he had not dismissed from his system the belief of purgatory. But then, it is likewise evident, from the language of this passage, especially when combined with that of the foregoing, that he considered purgatory as a place of intermediate suffering, beyond the reach of all human control or dispensation. "God," he desires us to remember, "is all-just; why? because he rewardeth all good deeds, and punisheth all trespasses in due time, *and in due measure*, both secret and open; neither may *any creature* resist his punishing, whether in earth, *or in purgatory*, or in hell."\* That in his representation of our condition, as moral beings, he had perpetual and faithful reference to the One Great Sacrifice, is obvious from these words: "Have a remembrance of the goodness of God, how he made thee in his own likeness; and how Jesus Christ, both God and man, died so painful a death upon the cross, *to buy man's soul out of hell*, even with his own heart's blood, and to bring it to the bliss of heaven."† And again, after dwelling on the bitter agonies endured by the Saviour, he adds, "thou shouldst think, constantly, how, when he had made thee out of nought, thou hadst forsaken him and all his kindness through sin; and hadst taken thee to Satan and his service world without end, had not Christ, God and man, suffered this hard death to save

\* Vaughan, vol. i. n. 326.

† Ibid. p. 322.



us. And then, see the great kindness, and all other goodness which Christ hath shown thee: and thereby learn thy own great unkindness; and then thou shalt see that *man is the most fallen of creatures*, and the unkindest of all the creatures that ever God made. It *should* be full sweet and delightful to us to think thus on this great kindness, and this great love of Jesus Christ.\* Among the most crying enormities of those times, may be reckoned the habitual profaneness which infected the language of the laity, and which, to say the least, received no effectual discountenance from the higher dignitaries of the Church. Wiclif himself, in his treatise of prelates,† describes the abbot, or prior, riding "with four-score horse, with harness of silver and gold, and many ragged and *fittred* squires, and other men, swearing *heart, and nails, and bones, and other members of Christ*." And we learn from Chaucer,‡ that men often seemed to glory "in swering, and held it a *gentery*, and a manly deed, to swere great oaths, all be the

\* Vaughan, vol. i. p. 327.

† Cited in Lewis, p. 39, 40.

‡ Parson's Tale, p. 183. Ed. 1637. And again, he gives us the following scene:

Our host on his stirrups stode anon;  
Sir Parish Priest (quod he) *for God's bones*,  
Tell us a tale.

I see well that ye learned men in lore  
Can muckle good, *by Goddis dignitie*.

The Parson him answered, *Benedicite*,  
What ellethe the man, so sinfully to swear?  
Our host answered, O Jenkin, be ye there?  
Now, good men (quod our host) harkneth to me:  
*I smell a Loller in the wind*, (quod he.)

Abideth for God's digne passion,  
For we shall have a predication.

This Loller here will preachen us somewhat.

SQUIRE'S PROLOGUE, p. 47. Ed. 1637.

So general was the practice, that Knyghton also mentions the abstinence from such blasphemies as one sure symptom of Lollardy. De Event. Angl. p. 2706. And it does, unquestionably, appear that the Lollards carried their scruples to a ridiculous excess. They held it unlawful to swear, on any occasion, *by a creature*; and, therefore, they refused to swear *by a book*! See W. Thorpe's Examination, Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 186.

cause not worth a straw." Against this odious abomination, Wiclif protests most vehemently in his Exposition. "For the love of Christ," he exclaims, "who for you shed his blood, beware, henceforth, night and day, of your oathes' swearing." It was sometimes suggested, that a frequent, even though somewhat irreverent, use of God's holy name, is a proof that we hold him constantly in our remembrance. This worthless apology he exposes to scorn, by showing that a man might just as reasonably pretend to honour his prince, by the frequent repetition of his name, even "though it might be to betray him, or teach others to despise him." To appeal to inveterate custom as a vindication, he affirmed to be precisely as if a thief should plead his long habits of plunder, in palliation of a detected robbery. To infer from the mercy of God, that "he will not damn men for a light oath," is, in effect, to forget, that only for eating an apple "against the forbidding of God, Adam, and all mankind, were justly condemned, until Christ bought them again, with his precious blood, and hard death upon the cross."\*

To these extracts I cannot forbear to add a noble passage from Wiclif's other Treatise on the Commandments, which appears in a work of his, entitled "The Pore Caitiff,"† a collection of small tracts, written in English, as the author declares, for the purpose of "teaching simple men and women the way to heaven;" and which, as Mr. Baber remarks, may, with propriety, be termed the Poor Man's Library. In his exposition of the first and second commandment, he says, "Let each man look into his own conscience, upon what he most sets his liking and thought, and what he is

Notice of Wiclif's 'Pore Caitiff.'

\* For the above extracts from the Exposition of the Decalogue, I am indebted to Mr. Vaughan, who has examined the MS. in the British Museum.

† The word caitiff is no other than the Italian word *cattivo*, a captive; and is used to signify any one in an abject or wretched condition.

most busy about to please, and that thing he loveth most, whatsoever it be: and what thing a man loveth most, that thing he maketh his god. Thus, each man wilfully using deadly sin, makes himself a false god, by turning away his love from God to the lust of the sin which he useth. And thus, when man or woman forsakes meekness, the meekness which Christ Jesus commandeth, and gives himself to highness and pride, he makes the fiend his god, for *he* is king over all proud folk, as we read in the book of Job. And so the envious man or woman, have hatred and vengeance for their god. And the idle man hath sloth and slumber for his god. The covetous man and woman make worldly goods their god; for covetousness is the root of all evils, and serveth to idols, as to false gods, as St. Paul saith. Gluttonous and drunken folk make their belly their god, for the love and care they have for it, as St. Paul witnesseth. And so, lecherous folk make them a false god, for the foul delight and lust that reigneth in them. Thus every man and woman, using deadly sin, breaks this first commandment, worshipping false gods. Therefore, saith the great clerk, Grosthead, that each man who doeth deadly sin, runneth from or forsaketh the true God, and worshipping a false god. All such are false gods to rest upon, and cannot deliver themselves, nor their worshippers from the vengeance of the Almighty God, at the dreadful doom, as God himself declareth by his prophets.\*

At the time that this language was uttered, we should recollect, the subtilties of the schoolmen had combined with the grosser corruptions of the Papacy, in weaving snares, and digging pitfalls, for the feet of the unwary and the ignorant. And therefore it

\* "The Pore Caitiff," with other portions of Wiclif's writings, hitherto in manuscript, have been recently printed by the Religious Tract Society, in a volume, entitled, "The Writings of the Rev. and learned John Wiclif." The above extract will be found in p. 63 of that compilation.

is, that the Reformer, in his prologue to the commandments, exhorts his readers to look at the divine testimonies with a constant view to the amendment of their lives, and to cast away from them the perilous sophistries, by which the precursors of Loyola had, even then, been labouring to *make the law of God of none effect*. "Let every man and woman," he says, "who desires to come speedily to the life that lasts for ever, do his business, with all strength of body and soul, to keep these commandments; and scorn all arguments of false flatterers and heretics, who, both in work and word, despise these commandments, saying that it is not lawful to be busy in the keeping of them; yea, and saying that it is needful sometimes to break them." And then he goes on to compare this unhallowed rivalry between the craft of man and the wisdom of God, to the accursed sorceries with which the sages of Pharaoh presumed to emulate the works, and to resist the power, of Jehovah.

I am induced to pause yet a moment longer upon Wiclif's Tract, of "the Pore Caitiff," as affording additional evidence of the steadiness with which he fixed the eye of faith and love upon our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls, "the BULL of our everlasting pardon, written with all the might and virtue of God." It is impossible to rise from a perusal of those sections of this treatise, which relate to "the charter of our heavenly heritage," and to the love of Christ, without the profoundest conviction that his hope was firmly staid on the only name whereby men can be saved, and that there is something approaching to pedantry in the question of Melancthon, whether he had a distinct understanding of *the righteousness of faith*. That he does not state it with the technical and scientific precision which was introduced by later controversies on the subject, is undeniable. But if all the blessed power of this doctrine was not in the heart and soul of Wiclif, I know not

where we are to look for any other Christian man who can be said to have been in possession of the secret!

The "Pore Caitiff" is further interesting as an eminent specimen of Wiclif's talents for popular exposition and illustration. This faculty is most signally displayed by him in his section on "the Armour of Heaven, or of Ghostly Battle." "Man's body," he there observes, "is as a horse that bears his rider through many perils. But it were great folly for any man to fight upon an unbridled horse; and if the horse be wild and ill-broken, the bridle must be heavy and the bit sharp, to hold him in. This bridle is abstinence, with which his master shall restrain him to be meek, and bow to his will. The bridle, however, must be managed by wisdom; for else the horse will fail at the greatest need, and harm his master, and make him lose his victory. Further, this bridle must have two reins, both strong, and even, so that neither pass the other in length. The one rein is too loose when thou lettest thy flesh have his will too much. The other is held too straight, when thou art too stern against thine own flesh; for then thou destroyest his strength and might, so that, to help thee as it should, it may not. Therefore, sustain thy horse that he faint not, neither fail thee at thy need; and withdraw from him that which might turn thee to folly.

"That thy seat may be both steadfast and seemly, thy horse needs to have a saddle: and this saddle is no other than *mansuetude*, or meekness of spirit, whereby thou mayst encounter all the roughness and peril of the way with the semblance of ease and mildness. This virtue of mildness of heart and appearance makes man gracious to God, and seemly to man's sight, as a well fitted saddle maketh a horse seemly and praisable.

"Two spurs it is needful that thou have, and that they be sharp, to prick thy horse if needful, that he

loiter not by the way; and these two spurs are love and dread. The *right* spur is the love that God's dear children have for the weal that shall never end. The *left* spur is the dread of the pains of *purgatory* and of hell, which are without number, and never may be told out. And if the right spur of love be not sharp enough to make him go forward in his journey, prick him with the left spur of dread, to rouse him."

It will readily be allowed that this sort of homely and familiar imagery, followed up, as it is in this tract, with all the urgency of solemn exhortation, is admirably adapted both to win, and to fix, the attention of plain unlettered men. And that "the Pore Caitiff" was highly prized as a work of popular usefulness, appears from the care that was taken to preserve and circulate it.\* One blemish, indeed, the reader will have noticed in this otherwise admirable composition; it furnishes another proof that the doctrine of purgatory was not yet ejected from his mind. A subsequent part of the tract contains a description of the intermediate sufferings to be incurred by sins which are not of mortal enormity; accompanied, however, with much salutary caution against all abuse of the distinction between deadly and venial transgression. Purgatory, indeed, forms a department of theology respecting which the mind of Wiclif was imperfectly settled, even to the latest period of his life. It should, nevertheless, be remembered

\* The following note, which is written at the end of one of the manuscripts of the "Pore Caitiff," in the British Museum, (MS. Harl. 2335.) shows the value attached to it in the period preceding the Reformation, and the methods resorted to for its circulation:

"This book was made of the goods of John Gamalin, for a common profit, that the person that has this book committed to him of the person that had power to commit it, have the use thereof for the time of his life, praying for the soul of the same John: and that he that hath this aforesaid use of the commission, when he occupieth it not, leave he it, for a time, to some other person. Also, that the person to whom it was committed for the term of life, under the foresaid conditions, deliver it to another for the term of his life. And so be it delivered and committed from person to person, man or woman, so long as the book endureth." Writings of Wiclif, ut Suprà, p. 122.

that he always carefully divested it of those perversions which, in the hands of the Romish Church, actually thrust the Son of man from his judgment-seat. And if he failed to cast into the sea every fragment of "mountainous error," which ages of superstition had been piling over the truth, we are still bound to recollect, with admiration, the gigantic strength displayed in his actual efforts for her deliverance. The above specimens may alone be sufficient to show us that the spirit which guided his meditations was at mortal variance with the spirit which presided, as well in the schools of theology, as in the high places of the Church. A voice was crying in the wilderness, in the language of accusation and defiance, against the mystery of iniquity, which was then working, and had been working for centuries, and had been forging shameful fetters for the immortal souls of men. A hand was toiling to plant that standard which was afterwards to be widely unfurled by Luther, as the rallying point to the nations of Christendom—as a signal for the resurrection of the mind of Europe. There breathes in the passages above recited, as well as in all his popular writings, a brave simplicity, an utter contempt of the "old drudging trade of outward conformity." It must even then have been felt that a minister was descending to trouble the stagnant waters of the ancient superstition, and to teach the impotent to seek for strength in the elements which that agitation would cast up. It is, therefore, far from wonderful that the ruling powers went *even as at other times, to seek for enchantments* against this formidable spirit: and that they earnestly charged their diviners and their seers *to curse him, whom God had not cursed, and to defy him, whom the Lord had not defied.* For a little while their devices were permitted to prevail; but in God's good time the season of healing and refreshment came forth from his presence, and Zion renewed her strength, and shook herself from the dust.

The testimony which Wiclif was incessantly lifting up against the Romish oppressions and corruptions, was, at this time, in full harmony with the tone of public feeling throughout the nation. From the days of the Conqueror to that hour, a struggle had been carried on between the sovereignty of England, and the supremacy of Rome. The conflict might have been marked by less disgraceful vicissitudes, had all our monarchs brought to it a hardihood, and dignity of soul, like that of the Norman. He never would suffer the bishop elected at Rome to be even named as Pope, in his dominions, without his express sanction. No Papal bull, or mandate, or instrument, would he allow to be circulated in his kingdom, until it had been first inspected by himself. When the Legate of Gregory VII. demanded, that he should do homage to the Roman See, his answer was, "I have been unwilling to do fealty to you hitherto, and I will not do it now; because I have never promised it, nor do I find that any of my predecessors performed it to yours." It is melancholy to pass on from his noble example to that of his degenerate descendant, the infatuated John, who laid his kingdom at the feet of an Italian priest. From that time the deluge of encroachment was continually rising. Some feeble embankments were, occasionally, raised against it. But, nevertheless, the waters rose, till they threatened to overtop the summits of all temporal authority. The harpies of avarice kept pace with the demon of ambition. England, according to the saying of one of the Pontiffs, was, as it were, the Pope's garden of delight; and well did he and his successors show the sincerity of their reliance on her inexhaustible fruitfulness! The spirit of her nobles, and even of her churchmen, would often manifest itself by loud and indignant outcries, when the hand of the plunderer was upon them. But the work of pillage, nevertheless, went on; till, at last, the im-

Notice of the  
 struggles of this  
 country against  
 Papal exaction.



poverishment and ignominy which it inflicted became too great for human endurance.

One process by which the life-blood of the country was drained out, was the practice of Papal provision; a prerogative, by virtue of which the Pontiff, at his pleasure, could declare the next vacancy of any ecclesiastical benefice or dignity in the kingdom, to be at his own disposal. The effect of this custom was to waste an enormous portion of the revenues of the Church upon foreigners, often the worthless creatures of the Pope; men, and frequently boys, who neither knew the language, nor touched the soil, of the realm upon whose resources they were thriving. Another consequence was, the frequency of appeals to Rome, by which the jurisdiction of the royal courts was contemptuously, and most perniciously, invaded. The year 1350 was rendered memorable by the establishment of two noble bulwarks against these usurpations.

The celebrated Statute of Provisors, declared void any collation to dignity, or benefice which should be at variance with the rights of the king, the chapters, or any other patron. The Statute of Premunire forbade, under the severest penalties, the introduction or circulation of bulls or mandates, prejudicial to the king or people; and all appeals to the Papal Court, in questions of property, from the judgment of the English tribunals.

The subsequent complaints of Parliament, nevertheless, show that, hitherto, the enactments of temporal legislatures were, to the giant strength of Rome, but *as a thread of tow when it toucheth the fire*. In

1373.

1373 the declining and feeble monarch was again assailed by the clamours of his subjects; and the result was, an almost abortive embassy to Avignon, (where Gregory XI. then resided,) to obtain redress of those grievances and insults, which, in defiance of the two laws above men-

tioned, were still heaped upon the Church and State of England. In the following year an inquiry was instituted into the number and value of English benefices, then occupied by Frenchmen, Italians, and other aliens; and the result exhibited an outrageous extent of abuse, which demanded one more vigorous effort. Another embassy was accordingly resolved on, in order to renew negotiations with the court of Rome. The name of Wiclif appears second on the commission appointed for that purpose; a circumstance which manifests, beyond all question, the importance and notoriety of his previous labours, and the confidence, both of the Crown and the Parliament, in his intrepidity and wisdom. The seat of these conferences was fixed at Bruges,—a city of great extent, and high commercial grandeur; and, moreover, at a very convenient distance from the Papal Court; for the spiritual governors of the world seem, in those days, to have been most wisely reluctant to expose the manners and habits of themselves or their dependents to the close inspection of enlightened or virtuous strangers. The usual chicanery of the Romish policy, together with the increasing infirmities and ruined influence of Edward III., protracted these negotiations for a period of two years; and, after all, deprived them of any effectual result. Their first fruits were a series of bulls, issued in September, 1375, containing a very partial remedy of the alleged enormities; and their final issue was an agreement that, in future, the Pope should desist from reservations; and that the King should desist from conferring benefices by his writ of *Quare Impedit*. Respecting the independence of the Chapters on Papal Confirmation, in the exercise of their right of election, not a syllable is to be found in the treaty. And that something like treachery had crept into the proceedings would appear from the fact, that John, Bishop of Bangor, who was at the head of the com-

1374.

Wiclif sent as  
an Ambassador  
to the Pope.

mission, was translated, by the Pope's bull, to Hereford, in 1375, and thence to St. David's, by the same authority, in 1389.\* By this attempt, therefore, the hide of the monster was, after all, but slightly punctured, and the "poor malice" of its adversaries remained still in danger of its fangs. One beneficial consequence, however, most probably must have resulted from the proceeding. It must have opened to Wiclif, in more distinct revelation, the serpentine mysteries of Pontifical diplomacy. It must have brought his eye somewhat closer to the deformity of the Queen and Mother of all the Churches; and must have moved his spirit to a sterner conflict with her abominations. That he enjoyed the unabated respect and confidence of his sovereign, during these services, may be concluded from the circumstance, that, in November, he was presented by the Crown to the Prebend of Aust, in the Collegiate Church of Westbury within the diocese of Worcester; and, some

1375.  
Wiclif presented to the Prebend of Aust, and the Rectory of Lutterworth.

time afterwards to the Rectory of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, an appointment which, for that turn, devolved on the Crown, in consequence of the minority of the patron, Lord Henry de Ferrars.

1376.  
Remonstrance of the "Good Parliament," against the extortions of the Pope.

The next assault on the Pontifical pretensions was made by the "Good Parliament," which met in the year 1376. It would be deviating from the object of this narrative to plunge into the labyrinth of those politics, which engaged that assembly in measures of determined opposition to the administration of the Duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt, or to enlarge on the growing importance of the Commons, which made them formidable instruments of hostility against an unpopular government. It is more to our purpose to notice the energy with which they addressed themselves to the duty of

\* Lewis, p. 34, note (a.)

exposing and denouncing the ecclesiastical oppressions which had long infested the country; and which had caused it, like a nation of patient and serviceable asses, (to use the contemptuous language of the Italians\*) to "crouch beneath two burdens"—impoverishment and disgrace. In the remonstrance which they presented to the Crown, they distinctly ascribed the misery, exhaustion, and depopulation of the realm, to the tyranny and extortion of the Romish hierarchy,†—and they concluded by demanding that, in

\* Fox, p. 462. Ed. 1694.

† This formidable indictment is somewhat too long for insertion in the text. It is, however, far too important to be altogether suppressed. It is, therefore, here given in the form of a note, and is eminently worthy of the reader's attention, as a full and authentic record of the evils inflicted by this organized scheme of plunder. Some little exaggeration may, possibly, here and there, have crept into their statements: but there can be no reasonable doubt of the correctness of the representation, in all its substantial particulars.

It was remonstrated by them, "that the tax paid to the Pope of Rome for ecclesiastical dignities doth amount to five-fold as much as the tax of all the profits, as appertain to the King, by the year, of this whole realm: and for some one bishopric, or other dignity, the Pope, by way of translation and death, hath three, four, or five several taxes: that the brokers of that sinful city, for money, promote many caltiffs, being altogether unlearned and unworthy, to a thousand marcs living yearly; whereas the learned and worthy can hardly obtain twenty marcs; whereby learning decayeth. That aliens, enemies to this land, who never saw, nor care to see their parishioners, have those livings; whereby they despise God's service, and convey away the treasure of the realm; and are worse than Jews or Saracens. It is therefore, say they, to be considered, that the law of the Church would have such livings bestowed for charity only, without praying or paying: that reason would that livings given of devotion should be bestowed in hospitality: that God hath given his sheep to the Pope to be pastured, and not shorn or shaven: that lay-patrons perceiving this simony and covetousness of the Pope, do thereby learn to sell their benefices to beasts, no otherwise than Christ was sold to the Jews: that there is none so rich a prince in Christendom, who hath the fourth part of so much treasure as the Pope hath out of this realm, for churches, most sinfully. They further remonstrated, that the Pope's collector, and other strangers, the King's enemies, and only leiger spies for English dignities, and disclosing the secrets of the realm, ought to be discharged: that the same collector being also receiver of the Pope's pence, keepeth an house in London, with clerks and officers thereunto belonging, as if it were one of the King's solemn courts, transporting yearly to the Pope twenty thousand marcs, and most commonly more: that Cardinals and other aliens remaining at the Court of Rome, whereof one Cardinal is a Dean of York, another of Salisbury, another of Lincoln, another Archdeacon of Canterbury, another Archdeacon of Durham, another Archdeacon of Suffolk, and another Archdeacon of York; another Prebendary

order to save the country from utter barbarism and desolation, the law against Papal provisions should be rigorously enforced; that no Papal "Collector or Proctor should remain in England, on pain of life and limb; and that no Englishman, on the like pain, should become such collector, or remain at Rome."

of Thane and Nassington; another Prebendary of York, in the diocese of York, have divers other the best dignities in England, and have sent over yearly unto them twenty thousand marca, over and above that which English brokers lying here have: that the Pope, to ransom Frenchmen, the King's enemies, who defend Lombardy for him, doth always, at his pleasure, levy a subsidy of the whole Clergy of England: that the Pope, for more gain, maketh sundry translations of all the bishoprics, and other dignities, within the realm: that the Pope's collector hath this year taken to his use the first-fruits of all benefices: that therefore it would be good to renew all the statutes against provisions from Rome, since the Pope reserveth all the benefices of the world for his own proper gift, and hath within this year, created twelve new Cardinals; so that now there are thirty, whereas there were wont to be but twelve in all; and all the said thirty Cardinals, except two or three, are the King's enemies: that the Pope, in time, will give the temporal manors or dignities to the King's enemies, since he daily usurpeth upon the realm, and the King's regality: that all houses and corporations of religion, which, from the King, ought to have free elections of their heads, the Pope hath now accreached the same unto himself: that in all legations from the Pope whatsoever, the English beareth the charge of the Legates; and all for the goodness of our money. It also appeareth, they say, that if the money of the realm were as plentiful as ever, the collector aforesaid, with the Cardinals' Proctors, would soon convey away the same. For remedy whereof, they advise it may be provided, that no such collector or proctor do remain in England, upon pain of life and limb; and that, on the like pain, no Englishman become any such collector or proctor, or remain at the Court of Rome. For better information hereof, and namely, touching the Pope's collector; for that the whole Clergy, being obedient to him, dare not displease him; they say, it were good that Dr. John Strensaill, parson of St. Botolph's in Holborne, be sent for to come before the Lords and Commons of this Parliament, who, being straitly charged, can declare much more, for that he served the same collector in house five years." It was further complained, that "by this unbridled multitude of apostolical provisions, as the Pope's disposals of church-benefices by his bulls were called, the lawful patrons of the several benefices were deprived of their right of collation or presentation; the noble and learned natives of England would be wholly excluded from all church-preferment, however of such as was valuable or honourable, so that, as was observed before, there would in time be a defect of council as to those matters that concern the spiritualitie, and none would be found fit to be promoted to ecclesiastical prelates: that divine worship would be impaired, hospitalitie and alms would be neglected, contrary to the primary intention and design of the founders of the churches: that the legal rights of the respective churches would be lost, the church buildings would all go to ruina, and the devotion of the people be lessened and withdrawn." See Fox, p. 482. Ed. 1684.

And these demands were vigorously followed up, in the Parliament of the next year, by a petition, that all provisors, and their ministers, should be out of the King's protection; that remedy might be had against such Cardinals as had purchased reservations to the value of 20,000, or 30,000 scrutes of gold—and also against the Pope's collector, a *Frenchman*, who was then residing in London, and conveying, annually, to the Pope 20,000 marks, or 20,000*l.*; and who, that year, was actually gathering the first-fruits throughout the kingdom. To this request the answer was, that redress had been promised by the Pope; and that, if he should fail to perform it, the Statutes and Ordinances should be observed.\*

1377.

The year 1377 was remarkable for the first violent eruption of that displeasure which Wiclif had been long heaping up for himself by his labours for the Reformation of the Church. He had returned from Bruges with a firm persuasion, that the Pontiff, the proud, worldly, priest of Rome, was "the most cursed of clippers and purse-kervers:" and he, probably, continued, more loudly than ever, his denunciations against the whole mechanism and fabric of his power. The English hierarchy felt themselves, at last, called upon to silence and to chastise the pertinacious heretic. And, accordingly, in the Convocation held on the third of February, 1377, a citation was issued for his appearance at St. Paul's, on the nineteenth day of the same month, on a charge of maintaining and publishing a variety of erroneous doctrines. Wiclif was now placed in circumstances of imminent peril; and it was extremely fortunate, both for him, and for his cause, that he enjoyed, at that time, the countenance and patronage of the Duke of Lancaster. It would be vain, at this day,

1377.

Wiclif summoned to appear before the Convocation at St. Paul's.

He is protected by John of Gaunt.

\* Fox, p. 483. Ed. 1684.

to search for the origin of his connexion with that ambitious Prince. The existence of such connexion, however, is very far from wonderful. Nothing can be more certain than the fact, that the Duke was decidedly adverse to the overbearing pretensions of the Papacy. It might, therefore, be reasonably expected, that his notice would be attracted by the abilities of a renowned Divine, almost incessantly employed in opposition to the same power. That Wiclif was not unknown at court so early as 1366, is obvious, from the circumstance that, in his *Vindication of the Resistance to the Papal Census*, he writes himself Chaplain to the King.\* The *Vindication* itself would, very naturally, recommend him further to the good opinion of the Duke.† And it is, moreover, tolerably certain, that his notions respecting the incongruity between secular office, and the clerical character, were in notorious accordance with those of John of Gaunt. And, lastly, his residence at Bruges might have brought him into still more immediate intercourse with the duke, who was there at the same time, as ambassador on the part of England, to conduct certain negotiations, then pending with France, under the mediation of the Pope. All these circumstances, taken together, may be sufficient to account for the appearance of this illustrious personage, as the friend and protector of Wiclif, in the hour of his danger. It is, however, by no means impossible, that he may have been influenced, not solely by his hatred of ecclesiastical power, but partly by his per-

\* *Peculiaris Regis Clericus.*

† It is stated by Mr. Lewis, that Wiclif "addressed some of his works which he published," to the Duke of Lancaster, in 1368. Mr. Vaughan, however, has shown that this must be a mistake; arising, probably, from a notice to that effect prefixed to a volume of Wiclif's MSS. in T. C. Dublin. On examination of the pieces in that volume, it was found that only one of them could be safely assigned to the year 1368, and that the rest contain allusions which clearly point to a subsequent period. Vaughan, vol. i. p. 304, 305. The contents of the MSS. volume in question, are the tracts from No. 1. to No. 19. in the second section of Mr. Vaughan's Catalogue of Wiclif's writings. Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 385.

sonal aversion to Courtney, Bishop of London, who was a Churchman of notorious arrogance, and had shown himself a determined adversary of the duke in the parliamentary proceedings of the last year.

On the day appointed for his appearance, Wiclif was attended to St. Paul's by the Duke of Lancaster, and by Lord Henry Percy, the Earl Marshal. The scene which ensued was exceedingly tumultuous. An immense concourse was collected in the church to witness the proceedings; and it was not without the greatest difficulty, that a passage could be made through the crowd, for Wiclif and his distinguished companions to approach the spot where the prelates were assembled. The Bishop of London on observing the impatience with which the Earl Marshal was forcing his way, and not, perhaps, highly gratified by seeing the delinquent so powerfully attended, told the earl, peremptorily, that "if he had known what *maistries* he would have kept in the church, he would have stopped him out from coming there." This unceremonious address was instantly resented by "the fiery Duke," who (possibly conscious that nothing more had been done than was necessary to make their way through the press) replied to the bishop, that "he would keep such *maistry* there, though he said nay." The parties, at last, struggled through, to our lady's chapel, behind the high altar, where the archbishop (Sudbury,) the Bishop of London, and other prelates, were assembled, together with several noblemen who had resorted thither to witness the proceedings. When Wiclif came into the presence of his judges, and stood before them to make answer as to the charges which might be produced against him, the Earl Marshal desired him to be seated; an indulgence which the fatigues of the day would render reasonable, and even necessary, "as he had many things to answer for, and therefore would have need of a soft seat."



"This interference," says old Fox, "eftsoons cast the Bishop of London into a fumish chafe." He declared that Wiclif "should not sit there. It was not according to law or reason, that he, which was cited to appear before his ordinary, should sit down during the time of his answer, but should stand." Upon these words much angry and indecent altercation ensued; in the course of which the duke began to assail the bishop with violent menaces, and told him that "he would bring down the pride not only of him, but of all the prelacy of England:" and added, "thou bearest thyself so brag upon thy *parents*, which shall not be able to help thee: they shall have enough to do to help themselves." The *parents* of the bishop were the Earl and Countess of Devonshire: and yet it would seem, he was able to keep the noble blood in his veins from hotly rebelling at this imperious threat; for his reply was singularly moderate and wise: he declared that, in truth, "his confidence was not in his parents, nor in any man else, but only in God—in whom he trusted." The *soft answer* failed, in this case, to *turn away wrath*. The passion of the duke overcame both his prudence and his sense of propriety, (a circumstance not very unusual even in those days of chivalrous courtesy!) and he vented his indignation by saying, in a low voice, to his next neighbour, that "he would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, than he would take this at his hand." The words were not so gently uttered, but they reached the ears of some of the Londoners near him. The duke was at that time far from popular with the citizens. He was not free from suspicion of some design upon their liberties. They had, moreover, been thrown into a state of some excitement by the display of angry feelings which they had witnessed. Hence, the vindictive language of the duke set them instantly in a flame; and they cried out vehemently, that they would lose their lives rather than see their bishop

so contemptuously and brutally treated. On this, the uproar became general: the assembly was broken up in furious disorder; and the process against Wiclif was, for a time, suspended.\* The tumult of the day, however, did not end here: all London was speedily in confusion. A band of rioters proceeded, the next day, to the Savoy, the Duke of Lancaster's palace, one of the most princely structures in the kingdom, reversed his arms as those of a traitor, and massacred a clergyman, whom they mistook for the Earl Marshal. The mob was at last dispersed by the exertions of the Bishop of London; the Mayor and Aldermen were removed from their offices; and their places are said to have been filled by the duke with dependents of his own."†

\* Mr. Milner, in his *Church History*, vol. iv. p. 115, says, "It would have given real pleasure to the lover of Christian reformation, if he could have discovered any proof that Wiclif protested against the disorderly and insolent behaviour of his patrons:" and, "that the deportment of the archbishop and bishop seems to have been more unexceptionable than that of Wiclif and his friends." Now does not this language seem to intimate that the writer must have been on the watch for an opportunity of disparaging the Reformer? As for the conduct of Wiclif's patrons, we have no objection to deliver it over to the displeasure of Dr. Milner. Little more, perhaps, can be said for it, (if correctly reported) than, that it was very nearly what might be reasonably anticipated from the haughty and semi-barbarous aristocrats of that age. The declaration of Bishop Courtney, that he would gladly have excluded the Earl Marshal from the Church, might be expected, in those times, to chafe the temper of a Percy, and highly to exasperate a Prince of the blood. But as for Wiclif himself, charity would, surely, presume that, if he did not interfere, it was because the tumult and violence of the scene were such as to make all interference hopeless and nugatory. Nay, any attempt to interfere, on his part, might only have aggravated the irritation of his high-born friends. Nothing can well be more unfair than to raise up unfavourable surmises on the strength of a negative circumstance like this.

† Mr. Lewis represents the appearance of Wiclif at St. Paul's as occurring in 1378. Mr. Vaughan, however, has shown, very clearly, that it must have been in 1377. There is no doubt that Lord H. Percy was Earl Marshal in 1377, and that he resigned that office the following year, and succeeded to the earldom of Northumberland. Besides, the days of the week and month, mentioned in the accounts of this transaction, agree to 1377, and not to 1378. Mr. Lewis, probably, was misled by the fact, that the bulls issued by the Pope against Wiclif, were dated June, 1377; since he describes the meeting at St. Paul's as held in obedience to those mandates. See Lewis, p. 54—55. Vaughan, vol. i. p. 354—357. Fox, p. 387, 388. Ed. 1684. In addition to the above considerations, it may

June, 1377. On the 21st of June, 1377, Edward III. breathed his last, and the first Parliament of his grandson, Richard II., assembled in October following. It appears from the rolls, that they continued, pertinaciously, to clamour against the shameless spoliation practised by the agents of the Pope. They complained that English benefices to the annual amount of 6,000*l.* were held by Frenchmen, and they prayed that the collecting of first-fruits and the procuring of Papal provisions within this kingdom might be punished by out-lawry; that all aliens, as well religious as others, should be compelled to avoid the realm; and that, *during the war*, all their lands and goods should be appropriated in aid of its expenses.\* The war here mentioned was among the *blessings* entailed upon his people by Edward's passion for military renown. The drain of national treasure which it occasioned, was ruinous beyond all precedent; and, subsequently, exposed the Crown to persevering and indignant remonstrance from the Commons. Even at this time the pressure was so severely felt as to raise the question, in Parliament, "whether the kingdom of England, on an imminent necessity of its own defence, might lawfully detain the treasure of the kingdom, that it be not carried out of the land; although the Lord Pope required it, on pain of censures, and by virtue of the obedience due to him."† On what precise occasion this momentous point was mooted, is not certainly known. It has been surmised that the Pope, encouraged by the prospect of weakness and dissension, incident to the accession of a minor, had

be remarked that, on this occasion, it appears that Wiclif was cited to appear before *his Ordinary*, not before the Papal delegates; consequently, not in obedience to the Papal bulls.

\* Cotton's Abridgement, p. 160. 162. Lewis, p. 55.

† Lewis, p. 54, 55. Cott. Abridg. p. 154.

revived the exaction of Peter-pence, the payment of which had been peremptorily forbidden by Edward III. The terms in which the question was proposed were, however, quite large enough virtually to determine, if answered in the affirmative, that the whole load of Papal exactions might be rightfully shaken off, in utter defiance of Pontifical fulmination. The matter was referred to the intrepid casuistry of Wiclif. In his answer, he tosses to the winds all merely human authorities, and appeals at once

The question of payments to the Pope, referred to Wiclif.

His answer.

to the divine law. In the *first* place, he, in substance, affirms that, by the ordinance of God, the principle of self-preservation, which belongs to individual creatures, is likewise clearly extended to communities: and that, consequently, our kingdom may lawfully reserve its treasure for its own defence, whenever its exigences may be such as to render that measure necessary. The same conclusion, he, *secondly*, asserts may be drawn from the law of the Gospel. The Pope, he says, "cannot challenge the treasure of this kingdom but under the title of alms; and consequently, under the title of works of mercy, according to the rules of charity;" and by these very rules, "it were no work of charity but mere madness," to waste our resources upon foreigners, already wallowing in opulence, while the realm itself is sinking under domestic taxation, and in danger of falling into ruin. These considerations alone might be amply sufficient to set the question at rest: but Wiclif seizes the opportunity thus afforded him of protesting, as it were before the king and his Parliament, against the worldliness and avarice of him who called himself the vicar of Christ, and yet was not ashamed to load himself with the spoil of the mighty, and to suck the very marrow of kings. It may, therefore, be important to furnish the reader with the very words of his undaunted testimony. The affirmative of this question, he says; "appeareth also by this, that Christ, the

head of the Church, whom all Christians ought to follow, lived by the alms of devout women. Luke vii. 8. He hungered and thirsted, he was a stranger, and many other miseries he sustained, not only in his members, but also in his own body, as the Apostle witnesseth. 2 Cor. viii. *He was made poor for your sakes, that through his poverty you might be rich : whereby, in the first endowing of the Church, whatsoever he were of the clergy that had any temporal possessions, he had the same as a perpetual alms, as both writings and chronicles do witness. Whereupon St. Bernard, declaring in his second book to Eugenius, that he could not challenge any secular dominion by right of succession, as being the vicar of St. Peter, writeth thus :—‘ If St. John should speak to the Pope himself, (as Bernard doth to Eugenius,) were it to be thought that he would take it patiently? But let it be so that you challenge it unto you by some other ways or means : but, truly, by any right or title apostolical you cannot so do. For how could he give you that, which he had not himself? That which he had he gave you ; that is to say, care over the Church ; but, did he give you any lordship or rule? Hark what he saith,—Not bearing rule, as lords over the clergy, but behaving yourselves as examples to the flock. And because thou shalt not think it to be spoken only in humility, mark the very word of the Lord himself in the Gospel, the kings of the people do rule over them ; but you shall not do so. Here lordship and dominion is plainly forbidden to the apostles, and darest thou, then, usurp the same? If thou wilt be a lord, thou shalt lose thine apostleship ; or, if thou wilt be an apostle thou shalt lose thy lordship ; for, truly, thou shalt depart from one of them. If thou wilt have both, thou shalt lose both ; or else, think thyself to be of that number, of whom God doth so greatly complain, saying, They have reigned, but not through me ; they are become princes, but I have not known it. Now if it do suffice thee to rule with [without?] the*

Lord, thou hast thy glory; but not with God. But, if we will keep that which is forbidden to us, let us hear what is said,—*He that is greatest among you, saith Christ, shall be made as the least, and he which is highest shall be made as the minister*; and for example, he set a child in the midst of them. So this, then, is the true form and institution of the apostle's trade: lordship and rule is forbidden, ministration and service commanded.\* By these words of this blessed man, whom the whole Church doth reverence and worship, it doth appear that the Pope hath not power to occupy the Church goods, as lord thereof, but as minister, and servant, and proctor for the poor. And would to God that the same proud and greedy desire of rule and lordship, which this seat doth challenge unto it, were not a *preamble to prepare a way unto Anti-Christ*. For it is evident by the Gospel, that Christ, through his poverty, and suffering, and humility, got unto him the children of his kingdom. And moreover, so far as I remember, the same blessed man, Bernard, in his third book, writeth also unto Eugenius.—‘I fear no other greater poison to happen unto thee, than greedy desire of rule and dominion.’ ”\*

And thus, for the second time, did Wiclif stand up, as the public advocate of his sovereign and his country. The reader will doubtless have remarked the peculiar language in which he here speaks of the temporal possessions of the clergy. He represents them as a *perpetual alms*; that is, not as contribution to be solicited by the clergy, day by day, or year by year, from the members of their flock; but, rather as an endowment originating purely in voluntary benevolence, and piety, to be equitably and faithfully continued to them upon the same kindly principle.

\* This answer is printed in Fox, p. 510. Ed. 1694; but so printed, (as Mr. Vaughan observes,) that it is not easy to see where Wiclif ends, and where the martyrologist begins again. Mr. Vaughan consulted the MS. Job. Selden, B. 10. and thus ascertained that what is given above belongs to Wiclif. Vaugh. vol. I. p. 363—365.

Whether this opinion be correct or not, it is evident from the above extract, that it was *the* opinion entertained by the Reformer; and that, although he speaks of clerical emoluments as eleemosynary, he must be understood to include their *perpetuity* in his notion of them. According to his views, the priesthood may be considered as holding their property under a tenure, liable to forfeiture by such gross abandonment of their duties, as must defeat the purposes for which the Christian ministry was instituted. This notice of his peculiar views is of considerable importance towards a just estimate of his theory, which has sometimes been represented as virtually reducing the secular clergy to a condition precisely similar to that of the Mendicant Orders. Against those Orders, and the very principle of their institution, his whole life was, almost, one incessant warfare; nothing, therefore, can be more absurd or self-destructive than the surmise, that he was anxious for the introduction of a similar principle into the ancient and established system. On this subject, however, more will be said hereafter.

## CHAPTER V.

1377—1379.

*Bulls issued by the Pope against Wicklif—Coldby received at Oxford—Wicklif appears at Lambeth before the Papal delegates—Violence of the Londoners—Message from the Queen Dowager—Wicklif's written answers to the charges—He is dismissed with injunctions to abstain from spreading his doctrines—His conduct on this occasion considered—His reply to the mixtim theologus—His views with regard to Church Property—In what sense he considered the possessions of the Church as Alms—His dangerous sickness—He is visited by several of the Medicants, who exhort him to repentance—His answer.*

THE pastoral duties of Lutterworth, and the labours of the theological chair probably divided the time of Wicklif, in the interval, between the month of February, 1377, when the tempest which threatened him was so suddenly dispersed, and the close of the same year, when it once more gathered over his head. It does not appear that any record has been preserved of the erroneous articles of doctrine for which he was summoned to answer before the convocation at St. Paul's. Agents, however, were busily at work, by whose fidelity and diligence the Apostolic See was, soon after, provided with materials of accusation; and, accordingly, in the course of some months from the tumultuous proceedings related in the preceding chapter, no less than four bulls issued forth, for the suppression and punishment of the audacious innovator. In these instruments, three of which are addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Bishop of London, the servant of the servants of God, "laments that England, illustrious for its wealth and grandeur, but still more illustrious for the purity of

1377.

*Bulls issued by the Pope against Wicklif.*



its faith, should now be overrun with the tares of a pernicious heresy; and, (to complete the affliction and the shame,) that the evil had been felt at Rome, before it had ever been resisted in Britain! His Holiness had been credibly informed that John Wiclif, Rector of the church of Lutterworth, and Professor of the Sacred Page—(it were well if he were not a master of errors!)—had broken forth into a detestable insanity, and had dared to assert and spread abroad opinions utterly subversive of the Church, and savouring of the perversity and ignorance of Marsilius of Padua, and John of Ganduno,\* both of accursed memory.” For this cause it was strictly enjoined that inquiry should *secretly* be made, respecting this matter; and, if it should turn out to be as represented, then the said John Wiclif should forthwith be apprehended and imprisoned, that his confession should be taken, *kept strictly concealed*, and transmitted under seal to Rome, and the offender himself detained, *until further directions should be received*. It was also enjoined that due vigilance should be exercised to preserve the king, and the royal family, together with his nobles and counsellors from the defilement of these pestilent perversions. And as “the arm of flesh” would be a convenient auxiliary in the execution of these spiritual measures, a paternal epistle is, further, addressed to his Majesty Edward III. requesting that he would

\* Of Marsilius, or Marsilius, of Padua, and John of Ganduno, some account may be found in Fox. These two men were the most active champions of the Franciscans, when they were suffering from the severities of the Pope John XXII. When the conflict broke out between him and the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria, they fled to the Emperor, and were employed by him as advocates against the Pontiff. The writings of Marsilius laid the axe directly to the root of the Papal supremacy; and, what is at least equally remarkable, they maintained the true Protestant doctrine of free Justification by Grace. They declared that *merits* are no efficient causes of our salvation, but only a condition *sine qua non*; that works are no causes of justification, but that justification goeth not without them. For these, and similar opinions, he and John de Ganduno were condemned by the Pope, in 1330. See Fox, p. 443, 444. Ed. 1684. Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 348.

deign to extend his gracious support to the proceedings of the prelates, as he valued his good name on earth, his bliss in heaven, and the benediction of the Holy See. A mandate similar to the three former, was also addressed to the University of Oxford, strictly commanding them, on pain of forfeiting all the privileges conferred on them by the Holy See, to suppress the doctrines and conclusions imputed to Wiclif, to seize the person of Wiclif himself, and to deliver it to the custody of the archbishop or his colleague. With these documents was inclosed a schedule containing nineteen erroneous conclusions, said to be maintained and taught by the heresiarch.

The whole of the above formidable apparatus of missives, bears date the 11th of June, 1377; so that there must have been abundant time for conveying to Rome, previous to the concoction of these instruments, full intelligence of the decisive answer given by Wiclif to the question proposed to him by Parliament, in the early part of the year, relative to the lawfulness of withholding payments from the Pope. This last overt act of rebellion must have amply filled up the measure of his iniquities, and heated *one seven times hotter than before*, the furnace of the Pontifical wrath. In the Primate of England and the Bishop of London, the Holy See found most willing and faithful ministers, who declared that neither entreaties, nor menaces, nor gifts, nor the imminent terrors of death itself, should divert them from their duty in this righteous cause.\* At Oxford, however, the reception of the Papal rescript was lamentably different from what might have been expected from true sons and champions of the Church. It was even debated whether the Bull should be honourably re-

\* "Episcopi . . . animati plurimum, profitebantur se nullius precibus, nullius minis vel muneribus esse flectendos, quin, in istâ causâ rectâ, justitiam sequerentur, etiam si periculum capitis immineret." *Wals.* p. 205.

ceived, or disdainfully rejected.\* In the first place, it was a manifest invasion of their privileges; and secondly, it demanded the sacrifice of a man who had long been the champion of their rights, and the glory of the University. The mandate, however, was at last received, though with manifest coldness and reluctance; and its reception was followed by no symptoms of readiness to comply with its requisitions.

The Papal orders coldly received at Oxford.

To quicken their movements, a peremptory letter was addressed by Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the Chancellor of Oxford, insisting upon a speedy and faithful obedience to the commands of the Pope; and the result of all these preliminary proceedings was, that early in the next year, Wiclif appeared before the synod of Papal commissioners, assembled in the archbishop's chapel, at Lambeth palace. But here again, disappointment was in store for the inquisitors. At the time of the meeting, the place was besieged by multitudes of the Londoners, who are represented by the chronicles of the time, as deeply infected by the heresy of Wiclif. The more violent and outrageous among them broke into the chapel† where the delegates Londoners. were convened, and showed by their words and demeanour, that they were prepared to resent very effectually the infliction of injury on the person of the reformer. The consternation of the delegates was extreme; and it was not at all miti-

1378.  
Wiclif appears at Lambeth before the Papal Delegates.

\* To the utter amazement and dismay of Walsingham! "Diu in pendulo hærebant utrum papalem bullam deberent cum honore recipere, vel omnino cum dedecore refutare. Oxoniense Studium generale! quàm gravi lapsu a sapientiæ et scientiæ culmine decidisti; quod quondam inextricabilia atque dubia toti mundo declarare consuevisti; jam, ignorantis nubilo obfuscatum, dubitare non vereris quæ quolibet e laicis Christianis dubitare non licet. Pudet recordationis tantæ imprudentiæ: et, ideo, supersedeo in hujusmodi materiâ immorari, ne materna videar ubera decerpere manibus, quæ dare lac potum scientiæ consueverè!" Wals. p. 200. Ed. 1574. ad. An. 1377.

† Wals. p. 206. Ed. 1574.

gated by the sudden appearance of Sir Lewis Clifford in the court, with a message from the Queen Mother, the widow of the Black Prince, positively forbidding them to proceed to any definite sentence against Wiclif. The effect of this mandate is indignantly described by Walsingham: "As at the wind of a shaken reed, their speech became softer than oil; to the public loss of their own dignity, and the damage of the whole Church. They who had sworn that they would yield no obedience even to the princes and nobles of the realm, until they had chastised the excesses of the heresiarch, conformably to the Papal mandate, were smitten with such terror by the face of an obscure retainer of the princess, that you would have thought their horns were gone,\* and that they had become as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs." And thus was the prey once more rent from the jaws of the lion. The whole scene furnishes a curious indication of the turbulent spirit of those times; and the irruption of the mob, on the one hand, and the imperious message of the royal dowager on the other, demonstrate that the influence of Wiclif had made formidable incursions into almost every region of society, from the highest to the lowest.

At this meeting, Wiclif delivered to the commissioners a paper, containing an answer to the charges of heresy, and an explanation of the opinions contained in his conclusions.† He was, nevertheless, strictly admonished by the delegates to abstain from repeating such propositions, either in the schools, or in his sermons, in order that the laity might

Message from  
the Queen Dow-  
ager.

Wiclif's written  
answer to the  
charges.

He is dismissed,  
with injunctions  
to abstain from  
spreading his  
doctrines.

\* Such are the words of the Chronicler: "*—ut cornibus eos carere putares; factos velut homo non audiens, et non habens in ore suo redargutiones.*" Wals. Hist. Angl. p. 206, 206. Ed. 1574.

† "*Conclusiones suas, cum responsione suis.*" Selden. MSS. Arch. B. 10. It is also printed in Walsingham, p. 206—209.

not be made to stumble by his perversions: an injunction, which, as the popish chronicler complains, he treated with contempt, and persisted in scattering conclusions still more pernicious.\* Besides this paper, he presented to the Parliament, which assembled early in April, 1378, another document of a similar import, though with some variations, and in several parts, much more diffuse and explicit than the former. His reason for submitting this declaration to Parliament, if we may judge from the somewhat obscure title† prefixed to it, is, that he had reason to believe that his conclusions had been imperfectly, or incorrectly reported at Rome. And here it is necessary for the biographer of Wiclif to pause awhile; because it is here that his conduct has been not only assailed by Popish adversaries, but languidly defended, if not openly condemned, by certain Protestant friends.

His conduct on this occasion considered. Let us then, first listen to the representations of his enemies. Among these, we may, naturally, expect to find the Popish

annalists; of whom none was more bitter and inveterate than Walsingham. By this writer it is affirmed, that "by these artful explanatory statements he deluded his judges, and threw some plausible meaning into his nefarious propositions;‡ all of which, if simply taken, according to the mode in which he produced them in the schools, and in his public preaching, unquestionably savour of *heretical pravity*." To this the answer is very simple and obvious: His

\* Wals. p. 206.

† "Protestatio Reverendi Doctoris, una cum ejus Conclusionibus, quæ ab eo, in subscriptâ formâ, sunt positæ; quæ, in constrimilibus materiis, et dissimilibus formis, sunt et fuerunt reportatæ, et ad Curiam Romanam transmissæ; et sic, in multis, minus bene impositæ." This paper is printed in Lewis, p. 382, No. 40., from MSS. Selden. Arch. B. 10.

‡ I presume, but am not quite certain, that this must be the meaning of his words. The reader shall judge. After recting his *first* explanatory paper, (the *second* he does not give,) the Chronicler adds, "Hoc eodem modo, idem versipellis ille Wicklefides, ponendo intellectum in suis nefandis propositionibus, favore et diligentia Londinensium, delusit suos examinatores, Episcopos derisit, et evasit." Wals. p. 209.

opinions, even as represented by himself in his explanatory papers, will unquestionably, be found, by all good Catholics, to savour very sufficiently of *heretical pravity*. And, if they savour of it somewhat less rankly than the conclusions imputed to him by the holy see, it is because he could not, in justice, be expected to stand or fall by a statement of his own opinions, coming from the mouth of an adversary, or an accuser. But this part of his case will be more fully considered below.

Still more dishonourable to the memory of Wiclif, is the representation of a modern enemy to Protestant reformation. "To prepare for the day of trial," says Dr. Lingard, "he *first* published a defence of part of his doctrine, in language the most bold and inflammatory. Soon afterwards he composed a *second* apology, in which, though he assumed a moderate tone, he avowed his willingness to shed his blood in defence of his assertions. There is, however, reason to believe that the new apostle was in no haste to grasp the crown of martyrdom. At his trial he exhibited to the prelates the same paper, but with numerous corrections and improvements." And in a note, the same historian says, "these three papers may be found in Walsingham," (whereas, in fact, only one of them is to be found there; namely, the paper which he presented on his trial,) and then adds with matchless composure, "there is no date to any of them; but their contents *seem* to point out the order in which they succeeded each other."\*

It is impossible to mistake the object of this statement. Its purpose, evidently, is to represent Wiclif as maintaining the port of heroism, when danger was at a convenient distance, and as lowering his tone precisely according to the urgency of its approach! Now, in the first place, on a moment's consideration, it must surely occur to every reader, that to publish

\* Lingard's England, vol. iv. p. 256, 257.

an *inflammatory statement* of heretical opinions, must, in those times, have been rather a hazardous mode of *preparing for trial*, before a tribunal of spiritual inquisitors, acting under the immediate commission of the Pope. But, in the second place, I know not to what inflammatory paper the historian alludes, unless it be to an answer published by Wiclif, to a violent assault upon his positions, by an anonymous writer, whom he calls a "motley theologue;"\* and if this be so, it is next to an absolute certainty, that this attack, or at least the answer to it, appeared *subsequently* to those two papers, which Dr. Lingard has been pleased to describe as the second and the third, and, therefore, could not be put forth by way of preparation for his trial. From the very language of the tract itself, it is evident that the delegates must then have been waiting the final decision from Rome. For, in speaking of the unlimited power of binding and loosing, claimed by the Pope, he there says, "Whether the judges or delegates, *by the Pope's permission*, proceed to condemn my conclusions, or the Lord Pope himself, the faithful are unanimously to make opposition to that blasphemous opinion."† Combine these words with the language of the Papal bull, which enjoins that the examination of Wiclif, together with the whole proceedings of the delegates should be transmitted under seal to Rome, *to await the further direction of his Holiness*,‡ and no reasonable doubt can remain, that the case had then been disposed of in England, so far as the commissioners had authority to dispose of it; and that they were actually expecting further instructions from the Pope, either in the shape of a final sentence from himself, or of a general permission to them, to deal with the matter as they should think fit.

Again, if Dr. Lingard's arrangement of these documents is to be accepted, it will follow, that the bolder

\* *Mixtus theologus.*

† *Lewis, p. 79.*

‡ *Donec a nobis super hoc aliud receperitis in mandatis.* See this passage of the bull in *Lewis, p. 311.*

and more explicit of the two remaining papers was composed before his trial, and afterwards softened down into the comparatively moderate apology which he actually exhibited to the prelates. All the evidence that yet remains to us, is directly opposed to any such inversion of their order. In the first place, —the title prefixed to the more diffuse of these Explanations, intimates that it was addressed to the Parliament;\* and, if so, it must have appeared subsequently to the proceedings at Lambeth; for the Parliament did not meet till after those proceedings had been concluded. But, further,—the paper itself contains a manifest reference to certain explanations and reasonings produced by him in some previous document; and such reasonings are actually found in the Paper presented to the Delegates. For instance—in Article 6 of the Paper, which stands second in Lewis, Wiclif speaks of the power of temporal authorities to take away the goods of a *delinquent* Church. This authority he had asserted to be derivable from the supreme power of God, which might, for that, as well as for any other purpose, be communicated to earthly potentates. But he adds—"lest this conclusion should, by reason of its remoteness, appear to be impertinent, *I have shewn* that temporal Lords have power to take away the alms conferred by them on the Church, whenever the Church abuses them:" and *to show this*, is actually the object of the sixteenth and seventeenth Articles of the former Paper.† The contents of these Papers do, therefore, "seem to point out, very plainly, the order in which they were delivered:" and that order is, beyond all reasonable question, directly at variance with the convenient surmise of Dr. Lingard.‡

\* Its title in the Selden MS. is "*ad Parlamentum Regie.*" See *Vaugh.* vol. ii. p. 384.

† See Lewis, p. 70, compared with p. 65, 66.

‡ The representation of this question given above, agrees, essentially, with that of Mr. Vaughan, which, on the best consideration I could bestow upon it, appears to me to be just. Vaughan, vol. i. p. 406, note 18,



The slanderous insinuation,—that Wiclif, on this memorable occasion, began by bullying, and ended by tameness and submission,—in the mouth of a Catholic adversary, will, perhaps, excite but little astonishment, though it may give rise to certain other emotions. But what must be our sorrow, should we find similar unworthy suspicions of Wiclif's integrity adopted, and maintained by a Protestant historian? And yet it is even so. "He delivered to the Court," says Milner, in his Church History, "a protest and qualification of his positions, which had been deemed erroneous and heretical\* . . . . One of his conclusions was this: 'All the race of mankind, here on earth, have no power simply to ordain, that St. Peter and his successor should politically rule over the world for ever.' His explanation before the Assembly was to this effect: 'This conclusion is self-evident, in as much as it is not in man's power to stop the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead:' an explanation," Mr. Milner observes, "which renders the conclusion equivocal, if not altogether nugatory."

Now, one would naturally conclude, from this statement, that the document in question contained not another syllable, which could affect the perpetual and uncontrollable supremacy of the Pope. But, if we turn to the eighteenth article† of this very Paper, we shall find a position insufferably offensive to Catholic ears, and virtually subversive of the Papal claim to absolute and irresponsible dominion. It is there distinctly asserted, that even the Pope himself may, on some accounts, be corrected by his subjects; and, for the benefit of the Church, may be impeached by both clergy and laity. This position is grounded by him on the consideration, that the Pope is our *peccable brother*, and liable to sin as well as we: and he plainly affirms, that, when the whole college of

\* Vol. iv. p. 117, &c.

† Lewis, p. 66.

cardinals is remiss in correcting him for the necessary welfare of the Church, the rest of the body, which may chance to be chiefly made up of laity, may, medicinally, reprove him and implead him, and reduce him to better life : a doctrine, which it would be difficult in theory, and quite impossible in practice, to reconcile with the indefeasible autocracy of the Vicar of Christ. Yet this is the doctrine exhibited by Wiclif to the Papal delegates at Lambeth, even according to the representation of Walsingham ; and it is wound up by these memorable words : " Far be it from the Church that the truth should be condemned because it sounds ill in the ears of the sinful and the ignorant ; for then the whole faith of Scripture must be liable to condemnation."\*

Again : his eleventh article maintains, that there " is no power granted by Christ to his disciples, to excommunicate a subject for the denial of temporalities to the clergy."†—" This," says Mr. Milner, " is a part of Wiclif's doctrine, which undoubtedly, was levelled at the right of the clergy to possess any kind of property ; and was intended to be applied to the purpose of setting that right aside. He takes care, however, in his explanation, to avoid the direct assertion of his real sentiment, by saying only—this is declared, in that doctrinal principle, taught in Scripture, according to which we believe that God is to be loved above all things ; and our neighbour and enemy to be loved above all temporal goods : for the law of God cannot be contrary to itself."

That this particular conclusion was levelled at the possessions of the clergy, is a point very far removed from the certainty which is here claimed for it by Mr. Milner. From the tenor of various other positions in the Paper, it seems, rather, to have been directed against the abuse of the power of excommunication. The ninth Article denounces the application of that

\* Walsingh. p. 208, 209. Lewis p. 66, 67.

† Walsingh. p. 208. Lewis, p. 64.

power to the purposes of personal revenge or passion: and, by parity of reasoning, it may here be condemned as a means of extorting the payment of clerical demands, whether those demands were just or questionable. His views, it must be confessed, are but obscurely and imperfectly developed in *this* Article; but from this, in combination with several other Articles, it will appear that, in his estimation, the power in question ought never to be resorted to, except with an immediate and charitable view to the benefit of human souls; and that, consequently, it could not, without impiety, be employed merely as an auxiliary to the interests of the priesthood; and that its use, for such purposes, was never warrantable, unless the case were one which might, directly and immediately, involve the honour of religion and the cause of God.\* And such a case might be fairly said to occur if the subtraction of clerical dues should be such, as to seriously threaten an utter cessation or suspension of religious ordinances.

The theory of Wiclif, respecting the temporal possessions of the clergy, is intimated in his eighteenth Article:—"When the Pope, or temporal Lords, shall have endowed the Church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take them away, by way of medicine, to prevent sin, *notwithstanding excommunication, because they are not given but under a condition.*" This position is precisely conformable to the doctrine he had maintained in his answer to the question of the Parliament, wherein he affirms the ecclesiastical endowments to be in the nature of a *perpetual alms*; liable to forfeiture, on a gross failure of the condition upon which they were originally granted. Whatever may be the merits or the demerits, of this doctrine, it is here, at least, with entire *consistency*, asserted by the Reformer. But, then, says Mr. Milner, the following is his explanation of it before the delegates.

\* He allowed that temporalities might be exacted by ecclesiastical censures, *accessorib; ad vindicationem Del.* Wals. p. 208. Lewis, p. 64.

“The truth of this is evident, because nothing ought to hinder a man from performing the *principal* works of charity. Yet God forbid that, by these words, occasion should be given to the Lords temporal to take away the goods of the Church.” And the historian adds—“I need make no remark on this conclusion, and its explanation!” Now, it is submitted, on the contrary, that the following remarks *may* be made, and *ought to be* made upon it:—first, that his notions on the subject are not to be collected *solely* from the brief and meager language of this particular Article, but from the tenor of the whole document; which shows, that he considered the subject of ecclesiastical property with constant reference to its effect on the spiritual interests of men; that he, accordingly, held that the purposes of *charity* might, in some cases of egregious abuse, be more transcendently and effectually accomplished by withdrawing, or suspending those spiritual alms, than by continuing to supply them; and that, consequently, the terror of excommunication itself ought not to deter the temporal authorities from venturing on this act of what he considered as *charitable justice*. The sixth Article of the same Paper, however, shows that he never contemplated, as legitimate, a spoliation of the Church, by the “*bare authority*,” and capricious will, of individuals; but a deprivation, by the authority of *the Church*: and by the Church, be it always remembered, Wiclif understood, not merely the clerical body, but the whole Christian community. So that the sum of his doctrine, as here asserted, amounts to this—that the authority of the temporal magistrate is fully competent to the office of providing, that ecclesiastical endowments should be applied to the purposes for which they were originally granted, on pain of forfeiture and confiscation; a doctrine which was afterwards formidably exemplified in the sixteenth century, but which it must have demanded no ordinary courage for any individual to breathe in the days of Wiclif:

especially in the presence of such a Court as was then assembled at Lambeth.

Another complaint of Mr. Milner is, that in some of his writings, Wiclif called the Pope antichrist, robber, and insolent priest of Rome; but that no such language is to be found in this protestation. It is, indeed, undeniable, that no such epithets or attributes are bestowed upon the Pontiff in this paper; and it would have been truly surprising if it had been otherwise. The conclusions which he was accused of maintaining, contain not a syllable to that effect; and I know not that the spirit of martyrdom itself can require of a man wantonly to exasperate his judges, by avowing practices or opinions which he is not called upon to vindicate or explain. But, further, it is extremely important to remark, that, in all probability, those writings of Wiclif's, which contain the most unsparing denunciation of Papal corruption and arrogance, were published subsequently to his appearance at Lambeth. I say, *in all probability*; because his works are so numerous, and so dispersed, that it might look like rashness to venture on a more confident assertion. Thus much, however, is next to certain,—that several of his treatises, which have hitherto been ascribed to an earlier period, could, by no possibility, have been composed till after that transaction;\* and that precisely in those treatises it is, that we find the most violent language of reprobation levelled at the Papacy. In that case, the fair and reasonable inference is, not that the terrors of persecution kept his opinions in concealment, but rather, that his detestation of the Romish system grew

\* This, I think, is shown irresistibly by Mr. Vaughan, with respect to the *Triologus*,—the *Sentence of Curse* expounded,—the treatises on *Prelates*, and on *Clerks possessioners*,—How Anti-Christ and his Clerks foren true Priests fro preaching the Gospel,—How Satan and his Priests casten by thre cursed heresies, &c. These are supposed, by Mr. Lewis, to have appeared previously to the Lambeth Synod. But Mr. Vaughan has proved this to be impossible, by showing that every one of them contains some allusion to events which happened subsequently. See note 2, to second edition of Vaughan, vol. i. p. 381.

stronger as he advanced in life; and that his indignation was probably aggravated, in his latter years, by the scandal which the Papal schism inflicted upon Christendom.

After all, however, it would ill become any candid biographer of Wiclif, to claim unqualified commendation for the document which, on this occasion, he exhibited to his judges. It would be vain to deny that there is, in some parts of it, an air of obliquity, of confusion, of scholastic intricacy, which very greatly weakens its dignity and effect. Whether this is to be partially ascribed to the peril of his situation; or whether it may more justly be considered as one unhappy symptom of the influence of the scholastic discipline upon his understanding, none can pronounce, but He who searcheth the heart of man. In the formation of our own judgment, however, it should always be recollected, that we have this paper just as it has been transmitted to us by his bitterest enemy, the historian Walsingham; that, nevertheless, with all its imperfections and obscurities, it contains an unflinching assertion of certain truths, which must have been as gall and wormwood to the adherents of the Romish hierarchy. Dr. Lingard, indeed, would have us believe that this explanation was received as *orthodox*, by the prelates. If the paper was so received, their lordships must have been beyond comparison, less fastidious than usual. The articles, for instance, which asserted the peccability of the Pope, and the power of the Christian community to correct his moral aberrations, were propositions of no easy digestion to an *orthodox* and zealous churchman of the fourteenth century! And if the judges of Wiclif were able to receive that *saying*, it is tolerably clear that their capacity for it must have been powerfully quickened by the cries of the London mob, and the "pompous" message from the mother of the king. But for these active stimulants, the *conclusions* of the reformer would probably have been

rejected with every symptom of abhorrence; and we have already seen that the Popish chronicler deploras and reprobates the rapid effect of these applications to the *conscience* of the delegates. Even as it was, they felt it necessary to enjoin that he should, for the future, abstain from trying the effect of his pernicious preparations upon the moral constitutions of the people.

It should further be kept in mind, that the explanations of Wiclif were still to be submitted to the judgment of the Pontiff, and that the impending terrors of that judgment had no effect whatever, in arresting or mitigating his exertions. In what Dr. Lingard calls his *inflammatory* paper, (his answer to the "motley divine," who had assailed him) his language is, more than ever, vehement and uncompromising; and this tract, it must be observed, was put forth at the very time, when his fate was pending at Rome; when every syllable that fell from his pen, or from his lips, would be faithfully and speedily reported to the Pope; and when the sentence of excommunication might, every moment, be expected to burst upon his head. And this sentence must, in all likelihood, have actually gone forth against him, had not the arm which wielded the thunder, been suddenly paralyzed by that portentous schism, which, soon after, astonished and convulsed the whole Christian world.

Both in the paper which he presented at Lambeth, and in that which he afterwards submitted to Parliament, Wiclif protests that he is willing to defend his opinions even unto death;\* and in the latter document, he distinctly professes that his object is a reformation of the Church.† In his reply to his "motley" antagonist, his profession is to the same effect. His adver-

\* Wals. p. 206. Lewis, p. 60.

† The concluding words of that paper are, "Hæ sunt conclusiones, quas vult, etiam usque ad mortem, defendere, ut, per hoc, valeat moras Ecclesiæ reformare." Lewis, p. 389.

sary had affirmed, that from the moment any one becomes Pope, he likewise becomes incapable of mortal sin; an assertion, says the Reformer, the consequence of which is, that whatever he ordains, must, of necessity, be just and rightful. The Pope might expunge any book from the canon of Scripture, or might add any book to it, or alter the whole Bible at his pleasure, and turn all the Scriptures into heresy, and establish as catholic, a scripture that is repugnant to the truth? It was his opposition to these monstrous notions, he observes, that had called forth the Papal fulminations, and armed the hierarchy, the University, and the throne, against him. He then alludes to the various conclusions, above adverted to, precisely according to the enumeration of them in his two defences; and he tells us, that the mark of heresy was most deeply branded upon those positions, which maintain that the temporalities of the Church are liable to forfeiture, in cases of habitual abuse, and that the Pontiff himself may lawfully be accused and corrected by his subjects. He then proceeds to vindicate those articles which relate to the power of absolution; and to denounce as blasphemous, the assertion, that the Pope, or the clergy, can bind or loose as effectually as God himself. Whoever makes this assertion, he declares to be a heretic and a blasphemer; one that should not be allowed by Christians to live on earth, much less to be their leader and their captain, since his guidance could only conduct them to a precipice. Such usurpation ought to be resisted by the secular authorities; not only on account of the heresy which denied them the power of withdrawing their alms from a delinquent Church; not only because it claimed for the clergy much more than a ministerial distribution of ecclesiastical possessions; but because it imposed an Egyptian bondage on the laity, and took from them the liberty of the law of Christ. And then it is, that he goes on to exhort the soldiers of Christ, both secular and cleri-



cal, to *stand for the law of God even unto blood*, and not to sink under the fear of pain, or the seductions of society, or the love of worldly profit. "If," says he, "the Lord Pope himself, at the suggestion of a Sergius, or an apostate Julian, or of his own heart, or at the instigation of the devil,—nay, if an angel from heaven, were to promulgate such blasphemous opinions,—the faithful, who hear the honour peculiar to their Lord thus unfaithfully usurped, must make resistance to it, for the preservation of the faith. For if," he adds, "it were once established, that the Pope, or his Vicar, does really bind and loose, whenever he pretends to do so, how shall the world stand? If,—whenever the Pope pretends to bind, with the pains of eternal damnation, all persons who oppose him in the acquisition of temporal things,—those persons are actually so bound; what can be easier than for him to seize on all the kingdoms of the earth, and to subvert every ordinance of Christ? For a less fault than this, Abiathar, was deposed by Solomon, Peter reprov'd to the face by Paul, and Pontiffs unseated by emperors and kings. What, then, should hinder the faithful from complaining of much deeper injuries offered to their God? You are told that secular men must not lay a finger on the possessions of the clergy; that ecclesiastics are placed beyond the reach of secular justice; that if the Pope issue his decree, the world must instantly obey his pleasure. If this, indeed, be so, what follows, but that your wives, and your daughters, and your worldly substance, are all at the mercy of the Pontiff, and his priesthood; yea, that the whole order of the world may be subverted! And is impiety like this to be endured by Christian men?"\*

Such was the testimony lifted up, at the close of the fourteenth century, against the gigantic power of the Vatican. Such was the voice which, in this

\* See Lewis, p. 78—80.

country, may be said to have opened those mighty pleadings, that were continued, at intervals, from generation to generation, until the days of Luther, when the cause was brought to its glorious arbitrement. In producing, however, the memorable words of these three Papers, I am not to be understood as the advocate for every doctrine they convey. Wiclif, beyond all doubt, both on this, and on many other occasions, expressed himself in language which may seem almost to justify the charge, that, by his system, all ecclesiastical possessions were marked out for spoliation.\* It must be allowed that he taught a lesson to princes, and to nobles, and to commoners, which they were all abundantly willing to learn; and most zealously, in a future age, did they "better the instruction!" At the same time, I cannot but repeat my belief that a somewhat more sweeping principle of forfeiture and confiscation has often been ascribed to him, than the general tenor of his writings will fairly warrant. The hierarchy of those days seemed to think and to act, as if the earth were theirs—as if the work of clerical appropriation was neither more nor less than a redemption of worldly wealth and substance from unhallowed uses—and that to touch their possessions, however fraudulently acquired, or however scandalously abused, was to be guilty of an impious desecration, which no enormity of Churchmen could justify in the sight of God or man. The spirit of Wiclif was stirred within him to protest against these principles. He accordingly laboured to recall the attention of the world to the original of all these sacred endowments: to show, that they were derived from the voluntary and pious liberality of laymen, under the implied condition that they were to be used for the temporal and eternal benefit of the human race. This, however, he unfortunately

Wiclif's views  
with regard to  
Church prop-  
erty.

\* Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. II. p. 368. fourth edit.

In what sense did by the reiterated application of a very dangerous syllable. *Alms* was the designation which he gave to clerical possessions of the church as *alms*. emolument of almost every description : and this little word, it must be confessed, was admirably fitted to make popular and current the convenient notion, that religious ministers are to be solely dependent on the feelings and the caprices of their congregations. He sometimes, indeed, speaks of the possessions of the Church as *alms in perpetuity* ;—as *alms*, because they had their origin in the religious bounty of secular men : as held *in perpetuity*, because they were granted by the donors without any limitation of time. Nevertheless, two things seem quite indisputable ; first, that, in his judgment, it would have been much better for the Church, if her ministers had never been invested with secular possessions at all ; and, secondly, that, in cases of flagrant abuse or neglect, the revocation of such grants fell, not only within the competency of the temporal authorities, but within the line of their positive duty. Such cases, he conceived, were perpetually occurring, under the system of ecclesiastical polity, which it was the business of his whole life to denounce, and, if possible, to reform : and it cannot be denied, that the tone in which he called for the correction of that system was, often, as inflammatory as his principles themselves were questionable and hazardous.

It may be convenient to introduce, in this place, a circumstance which occurred in the course of the following year, highly characteristic of Wiclif's unconquerable energy. Worn out by the toil of incessant composition, and by the anxieties occasioned by his recent prosecution, he was seized with an alarming sickness, while at Oxford, in the beginning of 1379. His old adversaries, the Mendicants, were in hopes that, with him, the season of suffering and danger would, likewise, be the season of weakness ; and that they

1379.  
Wiclif's dangerous sickness.

might, thus, have an opportunity of extorting from him some healing acknowledgment of his manifold sins against their Order. With this view, they resolved to send a deputation of <sup>is visited by several of the</sup> their body to his sick bed; and, in order <sup>Mendicants, who exhort him to repentance.</sup> to heighten the solemnity of the proceeding, they took care to be attended by the civil authorities. Four of their own doctors, or regents, together with as many senators of the city, or aldermen of the wards, accordingly entered his chamber; and finding him stretched upon his bed, they opened their commission by wishing him a happy recovery from his distemper. They soon entered, however, on the more immediate object of their embassy. They reminded him of the grievous wrongs he had heaped upon their fraternity, both by his sermons and his writings; they admonished him that, to all appearance, his last hour was approaching; and they expressed their hope that he would seize the opportunity, thus afforded him, of making them the only reparation in his power, and penitently revoking, in their presence, whatever he might have uttered or published to their disparagement. This exhortation was heard by him in silence: but when it was concluded, he ordered his servants to raise him on his pillows; and then, fixing his eyes upon the company, he said, with a firm voice, "I shall not die, but live, and again declare <sup>His answer.</sup> the evil deeds of the Friars." The consternation of the doctors may easily be imagined. They immediately retired in confusion; and Wiclif was happily, raised up again, and spared for several years longer, during which time he amply redeemed his pledge of renewed hostility to the Mendicants.

## CHAPTER VI.

1379—1381.

*Origin of the Papal Schism—Wickliff's "Schisma Papae"—His Treatise on the truth and meaning of Scripture—His Postils—Wickliff as a Parish Priest—Picture of the Clergy of that age from his tract, "How the Office of Curate is ordained of God"—Wickliff's translation of the Scriptures—Notice of previous versions of parts of the Bible—Caedmon—Alfred—Ælfric—The Ormulum—Sowle-helo—Rolle, the hermit of Hampole—Elucidarium. Bibliorum, or Prologue, &c., not the work of Wickliff—No complete version before Wickliff's—Question of appeal to private judgment—Wickliff's defence of the translation of the Scriptures—His version proscribed by the Church, but, nevertheless, widely circulated—Insurrection of the Peasantry—Causes assigned for it by Papal writers—its real cause, probably, the wretchedness and degradation of the peasantry—Possibly aggravated by the growing impatience of Ecclesiastical power—Injustice of ascribing it to the religious opinions of Wickliff and his followers.*

It will be remembered by all who have any acquaintance with ecclesiastical history, that very early in the fourteenth century the Papal residence was removed from Rome to Avignon. The first prelate that submitted to this migration was Clement the fifth, a native of France, who, being indebted for his elevation to the influence of Philip the Fair, complied with the urgent wish of that monarch, that the head of that Church should be constantly within his own dominions. This desertion of the ancient seat of spiritual empire was contemptuously styled by the Italians the Babylonish captivity: and, in truth, no form of sarcastic speech could well be too strong to describe the irreparable disaster and disgrace which this transfer inflicted on the Apostolic See. The absence of the viceregent of Christ was a signal for all the winds of faction to break loose, and to fight against the honour of the

Church, and the peace of Italy. During this calamitous period, the patrimony of St. Peter was ravaged, and the authority of his successor frequently treated with contempt. The thunders which shook the world when they issued from the seven hills, sent forth an *uncertain sound*, comparatively faint and powerless, when launched from a region of less elevated sanctity. The mighty voice which formerly made earthly potentates tremble, now seemed almost to *whisper out of the dust*; so that the terrors of the Inquisition itself were, sometimes, scarcely sufficient to keep alive the belief, that Christ had any longer a delegate or an oracle upon earth.

The termination of this *captivity* was, if possible, still more calamitous to the Papacy, than its commencement and its continuance. On the death of Gregory XI. in 1378, the people of Rome, disgusted and enraged by the spectacle of a long succession of Frenchmen in the Papal chair, terrified the conclave, (a majority of which were, likewise, Frenchmen,) into the election of an Italian prelate, Bartholomeo de Pregnano, who, together with the tiara, assumed the name of Urban VI. His insolence and rapacity soon drove the Cardinals from Rome to the territory of Naples, where they collected courage to declare their former choice a nullity, and to substitute for Urban, Robert, Count of Geneva, since known by the name of Clement VII. Which of these two was lawfully entitled to the pontifical throne, is, to this hour, a subject of debate. Each party, however, seemed to be confident of his own right: and the Italian, accordingly, remained at Rome, while the Frenchman adopted the example of his eight predecessors, and fixed his residence at Avignon. The cause of Clement was maintained by France, Spain, Scotland, Sicily, and Cyprus. The rest of Europe acknowledged Urban to be the true vicar of Christ. And thus, to use the subsequent language of Wickliff, "the head of Anti-Christ was cloven in twain, and

the two parts were made to fight against each other."

Historians present us with a frightful picture of the miseries inflicted on Christendom by this *great schism of the West*. In the first place, there was the odious spectacle of two competitors for the spiritual vicegerency assailing each other with dire and vindictive fulminations. Then followed the utter dissolution of morals among the ministers of Christ, who assumed the aspect rather of conflicting powers of evil than messengers of peace. Lastly came the distraction, and desolation of heart, suffered by pious and sorrowing multitudes, who knew not where to look for the representative of their Saviour on earth, and who thus fancied themselves cut off from that communion with the Head of the Church, from which alone they would derive any hope of salvation. Society appeared, for a long period, in imminent danger of being utterly cast loose from the anchorage either of faith, or hope, or charity. In short, the haunts of Superstition seemed to be burst open, and to disclose their secrets to the gaze of men and angels. But the march of God's Omnipotence was in the midst of this confusion. The tribulation of those days was a part of the process by which his Church was enabled to shake off her impurities. The Papal power was then smitten with a deep and desperate wound; and though she at length appeared to "close and be herself," her full strength never returned unto her; and half the world was enabled, after many a convulsive struggle, to break away from her deadly embrace.

By these commotions, the elements of destruction which had been gathering over the head of Wiclif were for a time dispersed. The fury of the rival Pontiffs was wasted upon the adherents of each other; and, in the midst of this most unhallowed strife, the delinquencies of the English heretic seem to have been well nigh forgotten. To him, however,

the imminent peril, which had just passed away, brought no thoughts of relaxation. On the contrary, the Papal schism, to which he probably owed his safety, became instantly the object of his indignant assault. At the very outset of the conflict, Wiclif was soon ready with a treatise on the subject, in which he invites the sovereigns of Christendom to seize the occasion, which Providence had sent them, of shaking to pieces the whole fabric of the Romish dominion. *Wiclif's Schisma Papa.* "Trust we in the help of Christ"—he exclaims—"for he hath begun already to help us graciously, in that he hath cloven the head of Anti-Christ, and made the two parts fight against each other; for it cannot be doubtful that the sin of the Popes, which hath so long continued, hath brought in the division." The time, he said, was now come for "Emperors and kings to help, in this cause, to maintain God's law, to recover the heritage of the Church, and to destroy the foul sins of clerks, saving their persons. Thus should peace be established, and simony destroyed." The suffrages of cardinals or of princes, could never, he adds, confer on man an immunity from error; "the children of the fiend should, therefore, learn their logic and their philosophy well, lest they prove heretical by a false understanding of the law of Christ: and, of all heresies, none could be greater than the belief that a man may be absolved from sin, if he give money, or because a priest layeth his hand on the head, and saith *I absolve thee*. Thou must be sorrowful in thy heart, or God absolveth thee not." He then goes on positively to deny the necessity of confessing to a priest; and, lastly, he calls on the secular powers to gird them up to the great work of ecclesiastical reformation.\*

Nearly about the same time with the above, ap-

\* "Schisma Papa." There is a copy of this Tract in Trin. Coll. Dublin. Class C. tab. 3, No. 12. See Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 4.



Wiclif "on the Truth and Meaning of Scripture." appeared his work "on the Truth and Meaning of Scripture;" one of the most copious and important of all his performances. If this were the only monument which Wiclif had left us, it would have been nearly sufficient to put us in full possession of his opinions and his views, relative to every momentous question connected with religion. In this volume he contends for the supreme authority, and entire sufficiency, of the Scriptures, and for the necessity of translating them into English. He moreover insists, intrepidly and faithfully, on the right of private judgment, discusses every branch of the clerical power, and examines every department of moral obligation.\* A work like this would, alone, have been enough to entitle him to the veneration and gratitude of this country, as the great herald and forerunner of her reformation.

Among the voluminous remains of Wiclif's *Postils*. Wiclif, ample specimens are to be found of his instructions from the pulpit, delivered, probably, between the year 1376, when he was presented to the rectory of Lutterworth, and his death, which happened in 1384. Of the value of this species of ministration, his estimate appears to have been very exalted: and it is further evident, from his extant labours, that he selected that species of it which, if skilfully and vigorously executed, is, of all others, most useful and edifying, and which, unquestionably, is most in conformity with the primitive practice. The preachers of those days had two methods of addressing their congregations from the pulpit: they either announced some particular subject, on which it was their intention to enlarge; and in that case, their discourse assumed something of the form of an oration, or declamatory essay: and this, in the technical language of the times, was known by the name

\* Lewis, p. 81.

of *declaring*: or, else, they read to their audience a certain portion of Scripture, which they proceeded to illustrate by exposition, and to render practically useful in the way of application. This latter method was designated by the barbarous term of "*postillating*;"\* that is, explaining by a sort of running commentary. Another practice, of much less ancient example, was that of choosing one or more verses of Scripture, and raising upon them a superstructure of exhortation or disquisition. In those days of metaphysical dissection, the preacher was frequently tempted, by this practice, into a labyrinth of divisions and subdivisions: and, in later times, the same method has, virtually, brought back the ancient practice of *declaring*; for, with us, the text is often little more than a scriptural motto, which serves to announce the subject of the oration or discourse. It is probable that the expository method has been gradually abandoned, from the extreme difficulty of conducting it with sufficient force and animation; the statement of their own thoughts being, to many, an easier task, than that of illustrating facts and characters, or developing the precepts and meditations of other teachers. This method, however, of *postillation*, or exposition, was the form selected by Wiclif for his parochial instructions. Some three hundred of his manuscript homilies are still preserved in the British Museum, and the libraries of Cambridge and Dublin, and in other collections. Of these many consist of little more than brief notes, thrown together, apparently, for the sole purpose of recalling to his memory the points on which it was his intention to enlarge. Others, again, are more completely wrought out, and sometimes approach to the form and length of a modern sermon. We learn from one,† who has laboriously examined the whole of

\* *Postilla* is a word of degenerate Latinity, signifying a marginal gloss, or commentary.

† Mr. Vaughan, whose account of Wiclif's homilies may be found in his second volume, p. 12—36.

them, that "there is scarcely a peculiarity of opinion adopted by Wiclif, the nature or the progress of which might not be illustrated from these voluminous remains." They are uniformly adapted to the purposes of popular instruction; and the Reformer evidently considered it as no departure from that office, to assail the abuses of the hierarchy, and to denounce them to his people as the grand impediment to their moral and spiritual progress. Throughout, the holy Scriptures are represented as the supreme authority from which we are to seek the knowledge of our duty, and the grounds of our social and moral obligations; the great truths of the Gospel are plainly and faithfully set forth; the frailty and depravity of man are urgently insisted on; the sufferings and merits of the Saviour, are represented as the only ground on which the sinner can rest his hope of pardon and acceptance; and the influence of the Eternal Spirit, as the only fire which can baptize the hearts of men unto holiness and purity.

One or two extracts from the sermons of Wiclif are here introduced; as some curiosity\* may natu-

\* For the power of gratifying their curiosity in this respect, the public is partly indebted to the industry of Mr. Vaughan, and partly to that of the compilers above mentioned, in whose recent publication may be found copious specimens of Wiclif's *Postils*, p. 186—336. Some few passages, indeed, had previously been given by Mr. Turner, in his *History of England*, vol. ii. p. 426, 427. In those extracts he has preserved the ancient orthography. A specimen or two of these venerable remains, in their primitive form, are here subjoined.

"And thus seyen these folk to the princes of the world, that these heretikes (the Lollards) ben false men agenys holy religioun; and they casten to destroy lordships and reumes; and therefore to maund them to be dede, or lett them to speke. But lordis seyen again, that they scholden knowe the lawe that Holy Chaurche hath to punische such heretikes; and therefore they scholden go forth and punish hem by here lawe. Bi such execution of such false Prelatis and freris is Goddes lawe qwenchid, and *Ante-Christis* arered. But God wolde, that these lordis passeten Pilat in this poynt, and knew the treuthe of Goddes law in here moder tonge, and have this two folke in suspects for here cursed lyvyng, and hidyng of his lawe from knowinge of seculeres: for, by this cautel of the fend ben manye trewe men qwenchid."

The following is the style in which he speaks of the pomp and grandeur of the high ecclesiastics: "In this point men synnen, specially the gretistes of the cherche; for they suwen nat *Christe* here, but *Ante-Christ*

fully be felt respecting the addresses of so eminent a preacher, to a parochial congregation in the fourteenth century. One of the first things that strikes us in these discourses, is, the entire confidence with which they apply to the Papacy the character of Anti-Christ. "The laws and judgments," says the preacher, "which Anti-Christ brought in, and added to the law of God, mar too much the Church of Christ. For, with the stewards of the Church, the laws of Anti-Christ are the rules by which they make officers therein: and, to deceive the laity, Anti-Christ challengeth to be, in such things, fully God's fellow. For he affirms that, if he judgeth thus, his will should be taken for reason; whereas, this is the highest point that falleth to the Godhead. Popes and kings, therefore, should seek a reason above their own will: for such blasphemy often bringeth to men more than the pride of Lucifer. He said he would ascend, and be like the Most High; but he challenged not to be the fellow of God,—even with him or passing him. May God bring down this pride, and help, that his word may reverse that of the fiend! *Well, indeed, I know, that when it is at the highest, this smoke shall disappear.*"\* Again: "It is known that Anti-Christ hath enthralled the Church more than it was under the old law, though then the service was not to be borne. New laws are now made by Anti-Christ, and such as are not founded on the laws of the Saviour. More ceremonies are now brought in, and more do they tarry men in coming to heaven than did the traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees. One cord of this thralldom, is the lordship

and the world. Loke at the Pope first, and his Cardinalis, whether they taken no worldly worachipe, but ben the lest, and the moost meke of all othre. More foul pride and covetise is in no lord of the world. Go we to bishopis biathe them, and rich abbotis, sadris of coventis; and these axen worldly worachipis; and by this may men know hem. And gif thou go down to steris, that been beggeris, that scholden be mekest, more worachipe of ther brethren taketh no man in this world, as bi knellings, with kisinge of feet."—Turner, vol. ii. p. 426, notes 50, 51.

\* Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 26, 27.

claimed by Anti-Christ, as being full lord, both of spirituals and temporals. Thus he turneth Christian men aside from serving Christ in Christian freedom ; so much so, that they might well say, as the poet saith in his fable, the frogs said to the harrow, '*cursed be so many masters !*' For, in this day, Christian men are oppressed, now with Popes, and now with bishops ; now with cardinals under Popes, and now with prelates under bishops ; and now their head is assailed with censures. In short, *buffeted are they, as men would serve a football*. But, certainly, if the Baptist were not worthy to loose the latchet of the shoe of Christ, Anti-Christ hath no power to impede the freedom which Christ hath bought. Christ gave this freedom to men, that they might come to the bliss of heaven with less difficulty ; but Anti-Christ burdens them that they may give him money. Foul, therefore, is this doing, both to God and his law."\*

Doctrine like this must have made the ears of the good people of Lutterworth to tingle again ! They had probably heard nothing at all resembling it from his predecessor : and if so, they must almost have looked to see the roof of their church falling upon their heads, when it first echoed to sounds of such audacity. Equally strange to most of them, though not perhaps so fearfully astounding, were his instructions on the mode of their acceptance with God. Having solemnly dwelt on the supreme majesty of Jehovah, and shown that His justice must be violated by forgiving sin without an atonement, ("else must He give free license to sin, both in angels and men, and then sin were no sin, and our God were no God,") he proceeds to consider what that atonement must be. His people, probably, might, at first, have expected to hear of the good offices of the saints, or of the maternal influence and authority of the Holy Virgin, who alone could secure the effective interces-

\* Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 27, 28.

sion of her Son, in behalf of transgression against the laws of the Father. Not a syllable of all this did they hear from the parson of Lutterworth. He refers, directly and *solely*, to the only Name whereby men can be saved; and this in language which might entirely become a Protestant pulpit at the present day. "The person," he says, "who may make atonement for the sin of our first father, must needs be God and man. For, as mankind trespassed, so must mankind make satisfaction: and, therefore, it could not be that an angel should make satisfaction for man; for neither has he the might, nor was his the person (or nature) that here sinned. But, since all men are one person, if any member of this person make satisfaction, the whole person maketh it. And by this we may see that, if God made a man of nought, or anew, to be of the kind of Adam, yet he was holden to God, as much as he might, for himself; and so he might not make satisfaction for himself, and also for Adam's sin. Since then, satisfaction must be made for the sin of Adam, as it has been said, such a person must make this satisfaction, as was both God and man; for, the worthiness of such a person's deeds would be even with the unworthiness of the sin."\* The whole tenor of his ministrations points to the agonies of this Divine and Incarnate Saviour as the only object on which the thoughts of men are to be fixed, when they are seeking forgiveness and salvation: and the practical inference is, that "we follow after Christ in his blessed passion,—that we keep ourselves from sin hereafter,—and gather a devout mind from him."† In speaking of the deservings of man, and the grace of God, he will be found to set his face, like a flint, against the current notion of man's sufficient and meritorious righteousness. He teaches us to look up to God as the only source of whatever may be good

\* On the Nativity of Christ. *Postila*, p. 187, ubi supra.

† Similar statements may be found in his Sermon on the Priesthood of Christ. *Postila*, p. 204, &c.

or acceptable within us. "We should know," he says, "that faith is a gift of God; and so God gives it not to man, unless he gives it *graciously*. Thus, indeed, all good things which men have, are of God; and, accordingly, *when God rewardeth a good work in man, he crowneth his own gift*. All this is of grace; even as all things are of grace, that men have, of the will of God. God's goodness is the first cause which giveth men these good things: and so, it may not be that God doeth good to men, but if [except] he do it freely, by his own grace: and, with this, we shall grant that men deserve of God." He then proceeds to express his utter contempt for the Pelagian doctrines on this point:—"The chiding of idiots, such as was Pelagius, and others, who conceive that nothing may be,—unless it is of itself, as substances are,—is to be scorned and left to fools."\* The freedom and sovereignty of Divine grace are here brought out into very bold relief; but there is no reason to suppose, from the whole complexion of his writings, that Wiclif held this doctrine in connexion with the belief, that the sanctifying influence can never dispense with the necessity of moral exertion on the part of man.

These specimens may serve to show the spirit in which the Reformer discharged the office of a preacher; an office, the neglect of which he regarded as the "foulest treason" to Christ; for this, he says, "Christ enjoined on his disciples more than any other: by this he conquered the world out of the fiend's hand; and whosoever he be that can but bring priests to act thus, hath authority from God, and merit in his deed."† That his labours, in this line of duty, were abundant,

\* The Leper and the Centurion. *Postila*, p. 193. ubi *suprà*. I suppose that the intention of the Reformer, here, is, to condemn the notion which represented responsible beings as resembling mere substances, whose essence is entirely independent of the qualities, and properties, which the Creative Wisdom may have been pleased to annex to them. Men are to be considered, not merely with reference to any thing inherent, essential, or unalterable in their natures; but according to the worth which may be communicated to them by the free and unbought grace of God.

† *Epistola ad Simplices Sacerdotes*.

as well as faithful and enlightened, may be concluded from the fact, that so many as 300 of his familiar Sermons, or Postils, still remain, notwithstanding his writings were marked out for destruction after his death; and that many of them actually perished, under the vigilance and activity with which the proscription was carried on. That his diligence in communicating instruction to the people, in their native tongue, was one grand instrument by which the diffusion of his opinions was accomplished, is beyond all controversy. The example was followed up with indefatigable vigour, by his adherents; and a power was thus put forth, in defence of the truth, similar to that which Innocent the Third had called into action for the support of falsehood and corruption. It is notorious, that the Mendicant Orders, at their first institution, were the most popular and effective preachers of their day. The Franciscans, more especially, were to be found in every village; and by the unwearied assiduity of their ministrations, they, and the Dominicans, at one time, nearly monopolized the veneration and obedience of the populace throughout the Christian world. One great secret of their power was the practice of addressing the people in a familiar style, and in the language of their country. The sincere and genuine words of eternal life, indeed, were never heard from their lips. Lying miracles—legendary histories—puerile and monstrous fables—"chronicles of the world—and stories of the battle of Troy"—these were the themes, which, in those ages, beguiled and led captive the souls of men, and banished the sound of the Gospel from the earth. The degeneracy of these fraternities has already been noticed; and it brought upon them the full weight of Wiclif's tremendous hostility. But while he detested their abuses, he was keenly alive to the efficacy of their *system*; and hence it was, that not only was he, himself, an indefatigable preacher of Gospel truth, but his "poor priests," both before and after his death,



were in perpetual activity almost throughout the kingdom. And although they may have dropped many a rank and worthless weed into the soil, it cannot be denied that they, likewise, cast abroad, in every direction, that good seed, which after a long wintry season, sprung up into the glorious harvest of our Reformation.

Wiclif, as a Pariah Priest. It may, with propriety, be mentioned here, that the faithfulness, the zeal, and the spirit of charity, with which all the duties of a parochial minister were discharged by Wiclif, have given occasion to the conjecture, that he may have been the real original of Chaucer's celebrated picture of the Village Priest.

"A good man there was of religion,  
He was a poor parson of a town,  
But rich he was of holy thought and work,  
He was a learned man, also a clerk,  
That Christ's Gospel truly would preach,  
His parishioners devoutly would he teach.  
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,  
And in adversity full patient,  
And such a one he was proved oft aithen,  
For loth were he to curse for his tithes,  
But rather would he give, out of doubt,  
Unto his poor parishioners all about,  
Both of his offering and his substance,  
He could in little have a suffisance.  
Wide was his parish, and houses far asunder,  
But he ne'er left, neither for rain nor thunder,  
In sickness, nor in mischief, for to visit  
The furthest in his parish, great or light,  
Upon his feet, and in his hand a staff.  
This noble example to his sheep he gave,  
That first he wrought, and afterward taught,  
Out of the Gospel he the words caught.  
And this figure he added thereunto,  
That if gold rust, what shall iron do?  
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,  
No wonder 'tis that a layman should rust.  
And shame it is, if a priest take keep,  
To see a foul shepherd, and a clean sheep.  
Well ought a priest, example for to give  
By his cleanness, how his sheep should live.

"He set not his benefice to hire,  
Nor left his sheep encumbered in the mire,  
And ran to London, to St. Paul's,

To seek himself a chantry for souls.  
 Nor with a brotherhood to be withhold,  
 But dwelt at home, and kept well his fold.  
 So that the wolf made them not miscarry;  
 He was a shepherd, and not a mercenary.  
 And though he holy were and virtuous,  
 He was not to sinful men despicious,  
 Nor of his speech dangerous nor dign,  
 But in his teaching discreet and benign.  
 To draw folk to heaven with fairness,  
 By good example, this was his business.  
 But if he knew any person obstinate,  
 Whether he were of high or low estate,  
 Him would he reprove sharply for the nonce.  
 A better priest I trow, no where there is,  
 He waited after no pomp nor reverence,  
 He made himself no spiced conscience,  
 But Christ's lore, and his apostles twelve  
 He taught, but first he followed it himself."

If the above be really a picture of John Wiclif, it is difficult for the imagination to figure to itself a more interesting spectacle than that of the Reformer,—at one time shaking the pillars of superstition, and bursting through the wall which enclosed its chambers of imagery—and at another, delivering the *sincere milk of God's Word* to his spiritual children, and standing as the minister of peace and consolation in the abodes of poverty and ignorance. At all events, it is refreshing to contemplate a picture like this, in the midst of the general declension from Christian integrity. One would willingly hope that, even in those days of degeneracy, many a similar example of ministerial zeal and faithfulness might still be found in the retired hamlets and villages of our country. If any one, however, is desirous of looking upon a deplorable contrast to Chaucer's representation, he has only to consult Wiclif's Treatise—"How

\* "Thus Langland, in *Piers Plowman's* vision, describes a priest:

———"Plained he to the bishop,  
 That his parishes were poor, since the pestilence time;  
 To have a licence, and leave at London to dwell,  
 To sing there for simony, for silver is sweet."

Picture of the  
Clergy from  
Wicliff's tract,  
"How the Of-  
fice of Curates  
is ordained of  
God."

the Office of Curates is ordained of God." He will there find, under three-and-thirty distinct heads, the multiplied delinquencies of the secular clergy of this kingdom, as they exhibited themselves to a censor in the fourteenth century. The language of this tract is quite as uncompromising as that with which he assailed the abuses of Mendicancy. "The Office of Curates," he begins, "is ordained of God: few do it well, and many full evil; therefore test we their defaults, with God's help:" and then immediately follows the catalogue of their misdoings. Every one would gladly believe that the picture must be overcharged: but if the representation does not outrageously exceed the truth, the clergy of that age were, not merely neglectful of their sacred obligations,—they were, absolutely, the pests of society—"angels of Satan to lead men to hell." Had they acted under a direct commission from the Enemy of man, they could not have fulfilled their charge with more dangerous and pernicious fidelity. They set to the world an example of every thing which an immortal and accountable being should scrupulously avoid. They were, many of them,—if we are to believe their accuser,—infamous for ostentation, sensuality, and avarice. Their doctrine, it may well be imagined, was no better than their example. "They taught sinful men to buy hell full dear.—They shut against their people the kingdom of heaven, and would neither go in themselves, nor suffer other men to enter." They were the flatterers and the parasites of the great, whose vices they encouraged by their own base and servile imitation. They were buried in all the surfeitings of a worldly life, "haunted taverns out of measure, and stirred up laymen to excess, idleness, profane swearing, and disgraceful brawls." They wasted their time and wealth in gambling, and revelry, went about the streets roaring and outrageous, and "sometimes had neither eye

nor tongue, nor hand, nor foot to help themselves, for drunkenness." They even gloried in that which was their shame, and were ambitious of winning, by these enormities, a reputation for "nobleness, courtesy, goodness, freeness, and worthiness." In the midst of this worse than pagan desecration of themselves, they maintained their influence and authority by an impious prostitution of the power of the keys, and extorted, by the terror of spiritual censures, the money and the obedience of their enslaved congregations.\* In some instances, they entered into an accursed partnership with the objects of their secret jealousy and hate, the itinerant friars and pardoners.† "For, when there cometh a pardoner to rich

\* As Chaucer's plowman says—

Christ's people they proudly curse  
With broad book, and braying bell,  
To put pennies in their purse,  
They will sell both heaven and hell.  
If thou the truth of them wilt tell,  
In great cursing shalt thou fall.

† The practices of these pardoners are described to the life by Chaucer:—

His wallet before him on his lap,  
Brimful of pardons come from Rome all hot:—  
In his mail he had a pillowbeer,  
Which, as he said, was our lady's veil;  
He said he had a gobbet of the mail  
That St. Peter had, when that he went  
Upon the sea, till Jesus Christ him hent.‡  
He had a cress of latten full of stones,  
And in a glass he had pig's bones.  
But with these relics, when he found  
A poor parson dwelling in upland,  
Upon a day he got him more money,  
Than that parson got in months tway,  
And thus, with feigned flattering and japes,\$  
He made the parson and people his apes.  
But truly to tell at the last,  
He was in church a noble ecclesiast.  
Well could he read a lesson or a story,  
But always best he sung an offertory.  
Full well he wist when that song was sung  
He must preach and well afile his tongue,  
To win silver as well as he could,  
Therefore he sung so merrily and loud.

‡ Caught.

\$ Tricks.

places, with stolen bulls, and false relics, granting more years of pardon than come before doomsday, for gaining worldly wealth, he shall be received of curates, to have a part of that which he getteth." With all these abominations upon their heads, they "magnified themselves above Christ, both God and man; for Christ bade his enemies, if he had spoken evil, to bear witness of the evil:" whereas these ministers of Anti-Christ defied all censures, disclaimed all penal jurisdiction, and commanded the world to follow their teaching, whether it were true or false. "Ye Curates,"—exclaims the indignant Reformer,— "See these heresies and blasphemies, and many more, which follow from your wicked life, and wayward teachings. Forsake them for dread of hell, and turn to good life, and true preaching of the Gospel, and ordinances of God, as Christ and his Apostles did, for reward of heavenly bliss."\*

It should be observed, that this tract cannot have been written until after the crusade, which was led by the Bishop of Norwich, in support of Urban VI., against his rival, Clement VII., as appears from the notice of that event, which occurs in the sixteenth section. It may, nevertheless, with perfect propriety, be introduced here, as exhibiting the accumulated result of Wiclif's observation, during the whole period of his public life. The picture, therefore, whether exaggerated or not, is, at least, not executed by a rash and youthful hand, impelled by the first ardour of reforming zeal. It is one of the latest performances of his mature and reflecting age. It proves that every day he lived, only gave additional keenness to his perception of these evils, and additional intensity to his desire for their correction. And even if charity should be allowed to approach and touch the canvass, —to discharge from it some tints of its fiery colouring,—and even to mitigate the vile deformity of its

\* The tract in question is given, in a compressed form, in the extracts from Wiclif's writings above adverted to, p. 123—136.

outline,—enough will still be left to raise the astonishment of later and better times; enough to command our veneration for that brave spirit which went forth to a conflict with such tremendous abuses.

But we are now to consider that mighty <sup>Wiclif's trans-</sup>undertaking, which, more than all the <sup>lation of the</sup> other labours of Wiclif, poured a blaze <sup>Scriptures.</sup>

of unwelcome light into these regions of darkness. For ages together, the mysterious and evil Power, shadowed forth in the Apocalypse, had shown itself armed with scales, that could turn back the point of ridicule, or the edge of invective, or the assaults of worldly might. But to unseal the sacred Scriptures, was to let loose an element, in the midst of which it was doomed to sicken and *wax faint*, and gradually to loosen the grasp with which it had well nigh strangled the energies of the human mind. And this was the immortal service performed for his country by Wiclif, when he put forth his translation of the Bible into the English tongue. It is impossible to convey to Protestant readers a more just conception of the importance of this task, than by producing the words in which it is mentioned by a Catholic historian. "There was another weapon," says Dr. Lingard, "which the Rector of Lutterworth wielded with equal address, and still greater efficacy. In proof of his doctrines he appealed to the Scriptures, and thus made his disciples judges between him and the Bishops. Several versions of the sacred writings were even then extant: but they were confined to libraries, or only in the hands of persons who aspired to superior sanctity. Wiclif made a new translation, multiplied the copies with the aid of transcribers, and by his *poor priests* recommended it to the perusal of their hearers. *In their hands it became an engine of wonderful power.* Men were flattered with the appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines insensibly acquired partisans and protectors in the higher classes, who alone were acquainted with the use of letters;

a spirit of inquiry was generated; and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed the nations of Europe.\*

These suggestions of Dr. Lingard are nothing more than what might reasonably be expected from any conscientious writer on the Catholic side of the question; and they are cited here purely as the most conclusive of all acknowledgments, that, whatever may be the merits of the great *religious revolution*, the labours of Wiclif in translating the Bible were powerfully instrumental in producing it. There is, however, one inaccuracy in this extract worthy of notice, because its tendency is to lower, in some degree, our estimate of the value of this gigantic work. It is as-

serted that "several versions of the sacred writings were even then extant;" in support of which assertion the writer alleges the authority of Sir Thomas More:† and the impression left by the statement is, that the English people were, at that time, in possession of some translation of every portion of the sacred Volume. That this representation is not correct, seems to be fully established by the inquiries of Mr. Baber;‡ from which we learn, that no researches, hitherto made, have discovered any attempt towards a complete English Version of the books of the Old and New

\* Lingard, vol. iv. p. 266, 267.

† "The whole Bible was, long before Wiclif's days, by virtuous and well learned men, translated into the English tong, and by good and godly people, with devotion and soberness well and reverently red." Sir Thos. More's *Dialogues*, iii. 14, quoted in Ling. vol. iv. p. 27, note 64. Even according to this statement, *the appeal to private judgment* was not altogether a new thing. The version of the Scriptures into the vernacular language of any country is, itself, a virtual appeal to private judgment, unless accompanied with a prohibition of its perusal by the laity, or by a perpetual commentary which, *authoritatively*, fixes the sense in which it is to be understood.

‡ See the "Historical Account of the Saxon and English Versions of the Scriptures previous to the opening of the fifteenth century," prefixed by Mr. Baber to his edition of Wiclif's translation of the New Testament; in which will be found the most complete body of information hitherto collected relative to this interesting subject.

Testament previous to the undertaking of Wiclif. In the interval between the seventh and eleventh centuries inclusive, paraphrases and versions of different portions of the Bible, undoubtedly, appeared in the Saxon tongue. The earliest of these was the work of the monk Cædmon; which, how-  
Cædmon.

ever, has no pretensions to the character of a translation. It is merely a religious poem, (the most ancient specimen of Saxon poetry) the materials of which are taken from the Scriptures. It opens with the fall of the angels, and the creation; proceeds through the whole series of events related in the book of Genesis; and comprehends various other portions of Scriptural history. This achievement was followed by literal Saxon versions of other parts of the Holy Writ, undertaken by a succession of writers, (among whom our illustrious  
Alfred.  
Ælfric.

Alfred holds an honourable place,) concluding with Ælfric, a learned and pious Saxon monk, who lived towards the end of the tenth century, and who laid before his countrymen, in their own language, considerable portions of the Old Testament histories.\* Even this work, however, is very far from a complete version. In many parts it is rather an abridgement, which gives merely the substance of the precepts enforced, and the facts recorded, by the sacred writers. To these, indeed, may be added a few manuscripts of the Psalter in Saxon and Latin, of uncertain date, but which may, probably be assigned to the period of the Conquest; and three manuscripts of the Gospels, in the Anglo-Norman dialect, of which the earliest may have been composed during the reign of the Conqueror, and the other two somewhere about the time of Henry II.

It is obvious, from the above statement, that at-

\* The list is as follows. The Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, some part of the books of Kings, Esther, Job, Judith, and the two books of the Maccabees. See Baber's Hist. Acc. p. lxii. lxiii.



tempts like these, even if executed with the utmost fidelity and correctness, being in an obsolete dialect, must have been entirely unserviceable in making the people of England, in the fourteenth century, acquainted with the contents of the holy Scriptures. It will, also, be found that subsequent undertakings of the same nature had very imperfectly supplied the defect. The earliest of these monuments, after the Saxon times, is a paraphrase of the Gospels and Acts The Ormulum. of the Apostles, entitled "Ormulum," (from the name of its author, Orme, or Ormin) written in imitation of Saxon poetry, without rhyme, but in the English language, in its very infancy. Next to this stands a curious volume, of prodigious size, entitled\* Sowle-hele, (or Sowle-hale. Soul's health) which has been referred to a period shortly anterior to the thirteenth century. It is beautifully written on vellum, and elegantly illuminated: and contains a metrical paraphrase of the Old and New Testament. The object of the compiler seems to have been to form a complete body of legendary and scriptural history in verse, or rather to collect into one view, all the religious poetry he could find.† Apparently coeval with this, is another version of a similar description, comprising a large portion of Genesis and Exodus, but evidently the work of another hand, and composed in the northern dialect of that age. In the same dialect is a rhymed version of the Psalms, which has been referred to the end of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century. There are likewise extant, copies of the same version revised and considerably improved.‡ It is not till somewhat later that we are to look for any thing like a literal translation even

\* MSS. Bodl. 779.

† Wharton's Hist. of Engl. Poetry, § 1, cited in Baber's Hist. Acc. p. lxiv. note §.

‡ Mr. Baber has furnished us with the translation of the hundredth Psalm, from this work, both in its original and its improved form. As these are interesting specimens of our language in an early stage of its

of any portion of the Sacred Writings. At that period the psalms and hymns of the Church were translated into English prose, with a comment to each verse, by Richard Rolle, a hermit of the Order of St. Augustine, known by the title of Richard of Hampole, from his residence in a nunnery of that name, near Doncaster. His prologue to what Mr. Baber calls this *versio princeps* will furnish a good specimen of his English, which will be found almost as intelligible as that of any modern work. "In this werke," he says, "I seke no strange Ynglys, bot lightest, and communest, and swilk that is most like unto the Latyne; so that thai that knowes noht the Latyne, be the Ynglys

transition towards standard English, the reader may not be displeased with their introduction here.

ORIGINAL VERSION.—Corp. Chr. Coll. Camb. MS. 273.

Mirthes to God al erthe that es,  
Serves to Loverd in fainde.  
In go yhe al in his siht,  
In gladnes that is so briht.  
Whites that loverd god is he thus;  
He us made, and our self noht us,  
His folke and shep of his fode.  
In gos his yhates that are gode;  
In schrist, his worches belive,  
In ympnes to him ye schrive.  
Heryhes his name for loverde is hende,  
In all his merci do in strende and strende.

IMPROVED VERSION.—Cott. MS. Vespas. D. vii.

Mirthes to laved at erthe that es,  
Serves to laved in famende.  
Ingas of him in the sight,  
In gladeschip bi dai and night.  
Wite ye that laved he god is thus;  
And he us made, and ourself noht us,  
His folke and schepe of his fode.  
Ingas his yhates that er gode:  
In schrist his porches that be  
In ympnes to him schrive ye.  
Heryes oft him name swa fre,  
For that laved soft is he.  
In evermore his merci esse;  
And in strende and strende his sothnes.

may come to many Latyne wordis. In the translatione, I felogh the letter als-mekille as I may; and thor I find no proper Ynglys I felogh the wit of the wordis, so that thai that shall read it, them thar not dread erryng. In expowning I felogh holie doctors. For it may come into some envious mannes bonde, that knowes not what he suld say at will, that I wist not what I sayd, and so do harm till him, and till other." Besides this translation, the hermit achieved various poetical compositions, among which are a version of the seven penitential Psalms, a paraphrase of some portions of the Book of Job, and another, on the Lord's Prayer, of extreme prolixity. About the same time, it would appear that the clergy were often in the habit of *appealing to private judgment* by translating for the use of their congregations such portions of Scripture as were more prominently introduced into the services of the Church; and to this pious practice we owe several other versions of the Psalter, of parts of the Gospel of St. Mark and St. Luke, and of the Epistles of St. Paul, usually accompanied with a devotional commentary; and among the MSS. in the British Museum is a translation, in the northern dialect, of the Dominical Gospels for the year, together with an exposition of the whole.\*

From the above brief survey, it is manifest that the task of presenting England with a complete version of the Old and New Testament, still remained open for Wiclif. The only circumstance which can throw the faintest shade of suspicion over his claim to the honour of this enterprise, is the existence of a little work, by the title of *Elucidarium Bibliorum*; or, "Prologue to the complete Version of the Bible." There are two grounds on which this tract has been supposed to impeach the title of the Re-

*Elucidarium  
Bibliorum; or  
Prologue, &c.  
not the Work  
of Wiclif.*

\* They who are desirous of more full information on the subject, must consult my authority, Mr. Baber, *Histor. Acc.* p. lviil—lxviii.

former to the distinction in question. The first is, that the Bodleian Library has a Manuscript of this Book, to which is annexed the date of MCCC....VIII. And if this date be correct, as it stands, of course there is an end of Wiclif's title to the glory of First Translator. This objection, however, may be disposed of by a moment's inspection of the MS.; from which it is clear, that the interval between the two Roman numerals, (C and V,) was originally occupied by another numeral, of which there has been a manifest erasure: and if, as is most probable, that numeral was a C, the date of the manuscript, instead of 1308, will be 1408, a period later than the death of Wiclif by four-and-twenty years. But, again, the Prologue above mentioned, has, by many writers, been ascribed to Wiclif himself. Now, most unquestionably, the sentiments and opinions it contains, are in perfect harmony with those of the Proto-Reformer; and the title-page of the printed edition of 1550, accordingly, speaks of it expressly, as "written about 200 years before by John Wyckliffe."\* If this were correct, the fact would, undoubtedly, be fatal to the notion, that his was the first complete Version of the Bible; for the Author, in the course of his work, not only adverts to his own labours as a translator, but alludes to another translation already in existence. But, that Wiclif was not the author, is irresistibly established by the internal evidence of the work itself. In the first place, it appeals, in the tenth chapter, to the authority of Gerson, (one of the most illustrious divines of that age) by the name of Parisiensis;† and, as Gerson

\* The title is as follows: "The true Cope of a Prologue wrytten about two C yeeres past by John Wyckliffe, (as may be justly gathered bi that, that John Bale hath written of him, in his boke, entitled the summarie of famousse writers of the Ile of Great Britan,) the original whereof is founde written in an Old English B ble, bitwixt the Olde Testament, and the Newe. Which Bible remaynith now in the Kyng his Majesties Chamber. Imprinted at London by Robert Crowley, dwellynge in Elie rents in Holburn. Anno Do. MDL."

† John Charlier Gerson was styled Parisiensis, in consequence of his being chancellor and canon of some church in Paris. His piety and eru-

was not born till 1363, it is scarcely credible that he could have become an author of celebrity till after the death of Wiclif, which happened in 1384. Again, in the thirteenth chapter, the writer complains bitterly of the impediments to the prosecution of theology, occasioned by a regulation at Oxford, which prohibited the study of divinity till two years after commencing in arts, thus deferring it for nine or ten years from the time of entering the University. It is true that this regulation was as old as the year 1251; but it had long fallen into utter desuetude and oblivion, and was not revived till 1387, three years after the decease of Wiclif. Lastly, the same thirteenth chapter (in which the author adverts to some unspeakable depravities, said to be notoriously prevalent among ecclesiastics) contains, towards the end of it, a manifest allusion to the articles, exhibited to the Parliament, in the eighteenth year of Richard II., with a view to the reformation of the Church; and this seems to fix the date of the composition, as subsequent to the year 1395, in which that Parliament was holden.\*

dition, likewise, acquired for him the title of Evangelical, and Most Christian Doctor.

\* See Fox, p. 577, 578. Ed. 1684, where these articles, or conclusions, are printed at length. They show that the eyes of men were then very widely open indeed to the corruptions of the clergy! The same may be said of the "Prologue," mentioned above. It speaks of the vices of the dignified ecclesiastics in language, to say the least, quite as unceremonious as that of Wiclif. For instance, in his tenth chapter, the writer labours after all manner of "base comparisons," wherewith to illustrate the profligacy and indolence of the prelates. He produces divers competent arguments and authorities, to prove that an evil prelate is a roaring lion—a wolf ravishing prey—an unclean dog—a crowe, or a raven,—(for the blackness of his sinnis)—salt without savour, not profitable for any thing—a hog (for his gluttony).—He is, moreover, a capon—"for, as a capon croweth not, even so, an evil prelate croweth not in preaching. Also, as a capon maketh fat himself, so an evil prelate maketh fat himself." Furthermore, an evil prelate is a chimera, "that hath a part of each beast;" and, again, he is nothing better than an idol—the mere semblance of a living prelate: and of such idols there be six several sorts; that is, idols of clay, of wood, of brass, of stone, of silver, and of gold. The fleshy and sensual prelate is an idol of clay—the witless and ignorant prelate is a figure of wood—"simulacris of brass ben they that have only worldly eloquence; for why—brass giveth a great sowne." Some prelates are wholly broken

From all this it seems, beyond reason-  
 able controversy, that Wiclif had no predecessor in his vast undertaking. It only remains, therefore, to be observed, that some writers have gravely questioned whether Wiclif had any hand whatever in the great work which now bears his name. Of all "historic doubts," this, perhaps, is the most baseless. The language of Knyghton alone is sufficient to overthrow it. "Christ," says the zealous Romanist, "committed the Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might minister it to the laity, and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times, and the wants of men. But this Master John Wiclif translated it out of Latin into English, and, by that means, laid it more open to the laity, and to women, who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding: and so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad, and trodden under foot of swine; and that, which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common-jest of both; and the jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the people; and what was before the *chief talent* of the clergy and doctors of the Church, is made for ever *common* to the laity."\* To this testimony may be added the words of Wiclif himself, who, in one of his homilies,† mentions the severity and persecution he had endured, because he had enabled the people to read the word of God in

off from "rightfulness and virtue:" they have nothing but mere "temporal strength," and are not better than statues, carved out of stone;—far different from the stone which was set in the head of the corner, these are only stones "of hurtyng and of sclander." The images of silver be they who are made by money, and who say, what will ye give us that we should betray Christ unto you! Lastly—the image of gold is the prelate who is advanced only for the sake of worldly pomp and nobility; for gold is the emblem of nobility, and therefore it is that the image set up of Nebuchadnezzar was of gold. These specimens of coarse satire are to be found from the seventh to the eleventh page of the tenth chapter, in the edit. of 1550. The volume itself has no paging.

\* Knighton, *De Eventibus Anglie*, col. 2644. quoted by Lewis, p. 88, 84.

† Hom. on Matt. xi. 23. See Baber, *Hist. Acc.* p. lxx.

their own tongue; and the fact, that in no list of his works that has yet appeared, has his translation of the Scriptures ever been omitted.\*

It is to be always remembered, that Wiclif's translation was made entirely from the Latin text, the only one at that time in use. It may justly be regarded as a glorious monument, not only of religion, but of letters. It exhibits our language in the most perfect form which it had then attained, and might, alone, have been sufficient to save it from relapsing into barbarism. The inestimable benefits conferred on the English tongue by our present version, are acknowledged by all who have entered deeply into the spirit of our national literature: and there can be little doubt that the labours of the Reformer were calculated to do a similar service to our genuine Anglo-Norman dialect, two centuries earlier. It is the opinion of Mr. Turner, who has diligently studied the *origines* of our literature, that Wiclif's ordinary style is less perspicuous and cultivated than that of Rolle, who lived and wrote many years earlier. Whether this is to be ascribed to his recluse collegiate life, to the cramping influence of his scholastic studies, or to some defect in fluency and facility of thought, the historian does not venture to determine; but he hesitates not to affirm, that his *postils*, in which familiarity and plainness were most to be expected, are decidedly inferior, in clearness and felicity of expression, to the composition of the Hermit, and even to those of some among the contemporaries of Wiclif.† That his style may have been somewhat darkened and confused, by his familiarity with the barbarous jargon of the schools may easily be imagined; and it must further be recollected, that his labours were so incessant, and his works so numerous, that he probably poured out the wealth of his mind with little habitual attention to the graces of composition,

\* Baber, *Hist. Acc.* p. lxix.

† Turner, *Hist. of Eng.* vol. ii. p. 583.

or the lucidness of arrangement. Thomas Aquinas, indeed, is said to have "the rare merit of combining great perspicuity and purity of expression, with all the refined distinctions and speculations of the schoolmen;" while Wiclif, like Peter Lombard and Duns Scotus, is neither classical (in the humblest sense of that word) in his Latin style, nor always distinct or vigorous in his English elocution. This remark is more or less applicable to all his works, except the version of the Scriptures; and there, Mr. Turner observes, "the unrivalled combination of force, simplicity, dignity, and feeling in the original, compel his old English, as they seem to compel every other language into which it is translated, to be clear, interesting, and energetic."<sup>\*</sup>

It is scarcely to be imagined, that in the completion of his task, Wiclif disdained to receive such assistance as he could procure. The labour must have been such as to overpower almost any single-handed

\* "There is something," says Mr. Turner, "remarkable in the composition of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, that although, in every language, they are the easiest book to a learner, they are yet dignified, interesting, and impressive. The Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Gospels, unite in a singular degree, simplicity and perspicuity, with force, energy, and pathos. I cannot satisfy myself what are the *literary* peculiarities—the felicities of language,—which make them so universally comprehensible, and yet avoid insipidity, feebleness, and tedium; which display, so often, such genuine eloquence and majesty; and yet are neither affected nor elaborate, nor, in general, above the understanding of the commonest reader." Turner, *Hist. of Eng.* vol. ii. p. 561, note B.

The extraordinary combination of excellence, which is here most justly described by Mr. Turner, may surely be regarded as one department of that vast apparatus of evidence, from which we conclude that the authors of Scripture were under the influence and control of the Spirit of Truth. To that Spirit was distinctly known "*what is in man*," and what would be best fitted to seize upon the feelings and the faculties of man. It was a work well worthy of the Sanctifying Power to endow his servants with "utterance and knowledge," which should take captive the hearts and the capacities both of the simple and the wise. The "*literary* peculiarities," by which this marvellous result has been accomplished, may, indeed, lie beyond the depth of human investigation. It may here be truly said, that the wind bloweth even as it listeth. We hear the sound thereof, but no man can tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth!

A specimen or two of Wiclif's Translation will be found in the Appendix.



strength, unless it were exclusively devoted to the work, instead of being divided by a vast variety of other engagements and undertakings. That he received *some* aid seems highly probable, from an intimation which is to be found in one of the manuscript copies of his Bible, at the end of a portion of the Book of Baruch; where are written the following somewhat obscure words—*explicit translationem Nicolay de Herford*.<sup>\*</sup> This remarkable notice, we are told, is subscribed by a different hand, and in less durable ink, than that employed by the transcriber of the MS., and may probably have been done by some one who had sufficient authority for his assertion. To what extent Wiclif was assisted in his great work, it is now quite impossible to ascertain. There has, however, descended to us nothing which renders it doubtful, that the whole was completed under his superintendence and revision, and put forth on his responsibility,—or that the substantial and almost undivided honours of the enterprise are, righteously, his own.

The manuscripts of this version are, to this day, exceedingly numerous. They are to be found, not only in the great public libraries of the empire,<sup>†</sup> but even in the collections of private individuals. We may readily judge of the activity and eagerness with which they were originally circulated, when we find that such a multitude of copies have still survived the exterminating zeal of Papal inquisitors. That the appearance of such a work occasioned, among

<sup>\*</sup> Baber, Hist. Acc. p. lxix.

<sup>†</sup> The British Museum, Lambeth, Sion College, the University libraries, particular colleges, and some cathedrals. Some few of these MSS. differ so materially from the rest, that we are led to believe that there must have been two distinct translations of Scripture. Some passages have no other correspondence except that which arises from the circumstance of their having been rendered from one common original, the Latin Vulgate. In general, however, the resemblance is such as to leave no doubt that the earlier translation must have been consulted by the author of the later. Baber, Hist. Acc. p. lxix. &c. where the reader may find some specimens of their nearest agreement, and their most remarkable variation.

the Romanists, the deepest alarm, and the hottest indignation, is perfectly notorious. The influx of light naturally produced consternation among those whose element was darkness.\* Wiclif himself was represented as little better than an audacious violator, whose hand spared not to rend the veil which had for ages concealed the mysterious sanctity of truth from the gaze of the profane multitude. His work was denounced and proscribed, as tainted almost with the guilt of sacrilege. The vehemence of displeasure which it excited among the hierarchy will sufficiently appear from the fact, that, some ten years after this period, a Bill was actually brought into the House of Lords, to forbid the perusal of the English Bible by the laity. This measure, indeed, was manfully opposed by John of Gaunt, who rose up in his place, and said, that "the people of England would not be the dregs of all men, seeing all nations besides them had the Scriptures in their own tongue."† But the seal was, nevertheless, afterwards affixed to the condemnation of all such attempts, by a constitution of Archbishop Arundel, which begins by declaring that, "it is a perilous thing, as Saint Jerome testifieth, to translate the text of Holy Scripture from one idiom into another; since it is no easy matter to retain in every version an identity of sense; and the same blessed Jerome, even though he were inspired, confesseth that herein he had, himself, been frequently mistaken." It was, therefore, enacted and ordained, that, "thenceforth, no one should translate any text of sacred Scripture, by his own authority, into the English or any other tongue, in the way of book, tract, or treatise; and that no publication of this sort, composed in the time of John Wiclif, or since, or thereafter to be composed, should be read, either in part or in whole, either in public or in private, under the pain of the greater excommunication, until such

\* *Trepidant immenso lumine Mases.*

† *Lewis, 84.*

translation should be approved by the diocesan of the place; or, if the matter should require it, by a provincial council: every one who should act in contradiction to this order, to be punished as an abettor of *heresy*, and error."\* Such was the decree of the convocation held at St. Paul's in 1408. It evidently amounted to an utter prohibition to translate, or to peruse translations; for it is easy to conjecture what, in those times, would be the fate of all applications for that purpose, either to diocesan or council! The persecutions which followed this edict are well known to all, and amply attested by the various episcopal registers. Ruinous fines, cruel imprisonment, and martyrdom at the stake, were the portion of multitudes, who ventured to consult for themselves the charter for their salvation.

The objections urged at that day, and still more confidently in subsequent ages, by the Romish Church, to the liberty of free access to the Scriptures, are now tolerably well known to every Protestant; and it may very safely be conceded, that there is about them, at first sight, an air of plausibility, which may well render them dangerous and embarrassing to many an honest mind. It is insisted, that the sanctity of the Divine Oracles is tarnished by the rash curiosity of ignorant men; that the Word of God, when cited by all parties, either for refutation, or defence, is degraded into an implement of unhallowed warfare; that the appeal to private judgment engenders a spirit of arrogance, a contempt for authority, and a lust for perpetual innovation; that its tendency is to break down the solid unity of the Faith, and to shiver it into fragments; to stretch over the Church "the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness" and desolation. And by those writers who have lived since the period of the Reformation, it has been broadly asserted, that

\* Wilkins's Concilia, vol. iii. p. 217. Constit. vii. Archb. Arundel 1408.

+ the innumerable swarm of sects which have sprung up under this system, are to be regarded as a plague, wherewith the displeasure of Heaven hath manifested itself against this insane presumption. The answer to all this, must, of course, be now perfectly familiar to every intelligent Protestant. The members of any reformed community will always be prepared to reply, that apparent and external unity is much too dearly purchased by a general sacrifice of private judgment; that schism itself is a less evil than a uniformity of error and corruption; and that no multiplication of divisions could be so pernicious, as the universal prostration of intellect and conscience before the authority of an uninspired tribunal. Such is the point of view under which the subject unavoidably presents itself to every tolerably well-informed understanding at the present day. To the mind of Wiclif, or any independent thinker of the fourteenth century, the question would naturally exhibit itself in a much more simple light. At that time it was hardly to be expected that any human sagacity should anticipate all the consequences of an unrestrained resort to the Sacred Text, and of free exercise of individual judgment as to the sense of it. In the primitive ages, indeed, the Scriptures were not locked up in a foreign tongue; and it may be said, that the early history of the Church is accordingly found to oppress the inquirer with a bewildering catalogue of heresies. But, then, the controversies of those times, it could not fail to be remarked, were chiefly confined to the regions of metaphysical speculation. The questions then agitated, had, most of them, no very intelligible reference to Christian practice; and they were, moreover, almost wholly unmixed with considerations, which involved the grounds of civil right, and secular interest. The Reformer of the middle ages, therefore, could hardly be expected to foresee the full extent of the price which Christian Europe would have to pay for the privilege of searching the Scriptures

without any reference to the authority of an *infallible* guide. With him, the "one thing needful" would be the liberty of comparing the practice of the Church with the text of the Holy Writings, which formed her charter. In his mind, the reasonableness of an appeal to the "Law and the Testimony," could not be embarrassed with the misgivings and apprehensions with which the question has subsequently been perplexed, in consequence of the endless variety of systems and opinions, engendered by the almost unfettered license of interpretation. These were difficulties and objections which never, probably, occurred to him, and against which he was not called upon to provide any vindication. He, accordingly, defends

the translation of the Scriptures, simply on the ground that they must have been designed for the guidance and instruction of all Christian men, of every degree, without exception. They who called it heresy, to speak of the Holy Scriptures in English, must be prepared, he affirms, to "condemn the Holy Ghost, that gave it in tongues to the Apostles of Christ, to speak the Word of God in all languages that were ordained of God under heaven."\* To the complaint,—that to open the Bible to all, was, in effect, to set aside the office, and to supplant the authority of those who were appointed to teach its doctrines to the people,—he replied, that "those heretics are not to be heard, who fancy that secular men ought not to know the law of God, but that it is sufficient for them to know what the priests and prelates tell them by word of mouth: *for Scripture is the faith of the Church*, and the more it is known, in an orthodox sense, the better. Therefore, as secular men ought to know the faith, so it is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. Besides, since the truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the Scripture

Wiclif's De-  
fence of the  
Translation of  
the Scriptures.

\* Wiclif's Wicket.

than the priests know how to express it, (seeing, if one may say so, that there are many prelates who are too ignorant of Scripture) and others conceal points of Scripture, such, for instance, as declare for the humility and poverty of the clergy,—and that there are many such defects in the verbal instructions of priests,—it seems useful that the faithful should, themselves, search out, or discover, the sense of the faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which they know and understand. . . . . He who hinders this, or murmurs against it, does his endeavour that the people should continue in a damnable and unbelieving state. The laws, therefore, which the prelates make, are not to be received as matters of faith; nor are we to believe their words or discourses, any further, or otherwise, than they are founded on the Scripture; since, according to the constant doctrine of Augustine,\* *the Scripture is all the truth*. Therefore this translation of the Scripture would do this good, that it would render priests and prelates unsuspected, as to the words which they explain."† Further:—"Prelates, as the Pope, and friars, and other means, may prove defective: accordingly Christ and his Apostles converted the world by making known to them the truths of Scripture in a language familiar to the people; and for this purpose the Holy Spirit gave them the knowledge of all tongues. Why, then, should not the disciples of Christ, at the present day, take freely from the same loaf, and distribute to the people? . . . . Besides, according to the faith which the apostle teaches, all Christians must stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable to him for all the goods wherewith he has entrusted them. It is, therefore, necessary that all the faithful should know these goods, and the use of them; for an answer by prelate or attorney will not then avail, but every one must then answer in his own person.

\* Epist. ad Volusianum.

† Speculum Secularium Dominorum. Quoted by Lewis, p. 86.

Since, then, God, has given to both clergy and laity the knowledge of the faith, to this end, that they may teach it the more plainly, and may faithfully work by it, it is plain that God, in the day of judgment, will require a true account of the use of these goods, how they have been put out to usury."\*

It will be seen that this vindication utterly discards the notion, that there can be any authority in matters of faith, co-ordinate with that of the Bible. The traditions of the Church, the decrees of bishops, Popes, or councils, all are here thrust down to a rank immeasurably below the eminence of the inspired writings. *The Scripture alone is truth. The Scripture alone is the faith of the Church*; these are the grand and solid maxims upon which, as upon the eternal rock, Wiclif built up the defence of this great undertaking, and, indeed, the whole fabric of his scheme of reformation. We have here the vigorous germ of Protestantism; cast by him with a bold hand, into the generous soil of his country, there to lie for a long and tempestuous period, to all appearance dormant and powerless, till the season should arrive for its starting into life. Another important merit of his Vindication, is the assault it makes on that refuge of lies, which the corrupt and superstitious heart of man hath made so strong for itself,—the belief, that the obligations to righteousness and holiness of life may be vicariously discharged, and that religion is a work which every individual may safely consign to the care and management of a spiritual factor. The Christian is here solemnly reminded that a day will come, when each man shall be called to answer personally for himself, and when no agent or "*attorney* of the soul," will be heard in his behalf. These were strange and startling words to the ears of Englishmen in the fourteenth century. They filled the hearts of the ecclesiastical *craftsmen* with dismay

\* *Doctrina Christiana*, lib. ii. ad fin. cited by Lewis, p. 87.

and indignation. Throughout their various ranks and orders, they began to exclaim that, if these doctrines were to be endured, they might as well throw up their functions at once. If all might consult the divine oracles, without the intervention of the priesthood,—if all might be allowed to conduct the entangling traffic and mystery of their own spiritual concerns, without the aid of a professional agent,—what further demand could there be for the services of the consecrated Orders? The resentment of the hierarchy, did not, however, evaporate in mere “sound and fury.” More substantial indications of their displeasure were in active preparation; and the audacity with which the Reformer assailed the received doctrine of the Eucharist, soon provided his enemies with an opportunity of renewing their hostilities.

Before we retire from the consideration of this great work, it will be proper to notice the astonishing rapidity with which the copies of it were circulated among all classes of the people, in defiance of obstructions, which, at this day, it is difficult for us to appreciate, or even to imagine. The astonishing powers of the press almost disable us from realizing to our conceptions the impediments through which literature had to force its way, in the ages previous to that invention. Those impediments, however, may be partially estimated from the fact, disclosed to us by the register of Alnwick, Bishop of Norwich in 1429, that the cost of a Testament of Wiclif's version, was no less than 2*l.* 16*s.* 8*d.* a sum, probably, equal to 30*l.* of our present money, and considerably more than half the annual income which was then considered adequate to the maintenance of a substantial yeoman. To procure a copy of the whole English Bible must, therefore, have demanded a sacrifice greater than that which, in our days, is required to command the most sumptuous and splendid elegances of literature. To this discouragement

Wiclif's version proscribed by the Church, but nevertheless widely circulated.



must be added the anxiety and the danger which this precious possession carried with it, wherever it went. During the time which elapsed from the reign of Henry IV. to the period of the reformation, the owner of a fragment of Wiclif's Bible, or indeed of any other portion of his writings, was conscious of harbouring a witness, whose appearance would infallibly consign him to the dungeon, and possibly to the flames. He must, consequently, have eaten the bread of life *in secret, and with carefulness*, and must have drank the waters of life *with astonishment and trembling of heart*. And yet, in defiance of obstruction and of persecution, the work went on. Neither the ruinous cost of literary treasures, nor the jealous vigilance of an omnipresent inquisition, were able to repress it. The stream continued to force its way, in a sort of subterraneous course, till the season arrived when it should burst forth, and refresh the land with its fruitful inundation. "Then was the sacred Bible sought out from dusty corners: the schools were opened; divine and human learning raked out of the embers of forgotten tongues; princes and cities trooped apace to the newly erected banner of salvation; martyrs, with the unresistible might of weakness, shook the powers of darkness, and scorned the fiery rage of the old Red Dragon."\*

1381. The year 1381 was rendered unhappily memorable by the insurrection of the peasantry of England; an event some notice of which is forced into a narrative of the life of Wiclif, by the assertion of some historians, that the popular excesses were occasioned, or greatly aggravated, by the diffusion of his doctrines. By one of these annalists it is gravely conjectured that this calamity was a clear indication of the displeasure of Heaven against the

*Causes assigned for it by Papal writers.*

\* Milton, on Reformation in England.

supineness of the hierarchy, which had omitted to repress, with due vigour, the impiety of Wiclif and his followers, in disseminating the perverse and damnable doctrines of Berengarius, respecting the body and blood of Christ. And this surmise the chronicler, with all imaginable solemnity, strengthens by reference to the extraordinary fact, that the commotions were simultaneous all over England; and that they occurred precisely within the octaves of that festival, in which the mystery of the transubstantiation is celebrated by the Church! He adds, that, although it may be reasonably believed that Archbishop Sudbury, (who was brutally murdered by the rabble,) may have died a martyr—yet the barbarous manner of his death was probably appointed in mercy, as a needful expiation for the sinful laxity of his discipline. Others there were, he confesses, who ascribed the affliction to the scandalous lives, the odious tyranny, the shameless hypocrisy, nay, the downright atheism, prevalent among the wealthy and the noble of the land: and many, again, were persuaded that the measure of national iniquity was filled up by the coarse profligacy, and rebellious insolence, of the populace themselves. And his conclusion, upon the whole matter, is, that in this instance, the wrath of God manifestly came down upon the children of disobedience.\* A more modern historian, without the slightest appearance of doubt or hesitation, attributes much of the excitement to the notions ascribed to Wiclif, and disseminated by his followers,—namely, that the right of property, was founded in grace, and that no one who was, by sin, a traitor to God, could be justly entitled to the services of man.† A more plain and rational account of the affair surely is, that this was one of those terrible and convulsive

Its real cause, probably, the wretchedness and degradation of the peasantry

\* Wals. p. 231.

† Ling. vol. iv. p. 226.

efforts, by which the lower classes, in the fourteenth century, laboured to heave off the load of intolerable servitude;—a phenomenon of the same class with jacquerie of France, and the rebellion of the Flemings;—a servile war, the natural effect of wretchedness, goaded to frenzy by the unfeeling arrogance and luxury of the great. The cruelty of the English aristocracy may, indeed, have been considerably less atrocious than that which drove the peasantry of other countries to despair. But the circumstances of the age were such as probably tempted them to harrass their dependents with more grinding exaction than they had experienced in preceding times. The landed proprietors had been impoverished, partly by an unprecedented and long-continued severity of taxation, and partly by their own inordinate craving for foreign luxuries of the most costly description. The embarrassment thus produced, naturally engendered avarice; and avarice, probably, gave birth to an inhuman disregard for the comfort of the poor, more especially of those who held their lands by the tenure of unmitigated villenage.\* In all this, there was power sufficient to raise the tempest, which threatened all the embankments of civilized society, without the aid of fanatical agitation. It is true, that the growing hatred of ecclesiastical dominion may have intimately connected itself with a wild impatience of all authority whatever. It is, also, possible that the voice of loud invective against the Church, may have assisted to call up, from the depths of the popular discontent, a mad ungovernable spirit of anarchy and rebellion. The charges with which the clergy were assailed, were, indeed, frequently such as an exasperated populace might easily transfer to abuse and tyranny of every description: and nothing,

Possibly aggravated by the growing impatience of Ecclesiastical Power.

\* See Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iv. p. 265—267.

it must be confessed, can well be more hopeless than the attempt to deny, that the language adopted by Wiclif, or his itinerant preachers, in urging *their* principles of reformation, did, frequently, burst through the barriers of sobriety and caution, and was, occasionally, violent enough to compromise the safety of nearly all existing institutions. It may be difficult, in times remote from this tumultuous period, to frame, or to admit, a complete vindication of such dangerous extravagance. But every one, who is well acquainted with the history of man, must, at least, be well persuaded of this,—that sedate and calculating spirits, like those of Erasmus, or Melancthon, could never have shaken the gigantic strength of the Papal system. They could neither have effected the Reformation of the sixteenth century, nor have done the office of pioneers to that great movement. This consideration, it is true, may be quite insufficient for the justification of rashness and excess; but it may, at all events, dispose us to look somewhat more indulgently on that intensity of soul, which troubled the waters, by whose disturbance we have been, eventually, made whole.

As for the speculations of the Papal writers, who connect the Rebellion of

Injustice of ascribing it to the religious opinions of Wiclif and his followers.

1381 with the doctrinal heresies of Wiclif, it has been truly remarked, that their charges are just as absurd as it would be to ascribe the outrages of the Anabaptists of Munster to the theological opinions of Luther.\* Equally unfounded is the insinuation, that the principles entertained by the Reformer were deliberately hostile to all authority, whether spiritual or secular, and that he deserved the confidence of the State as little as that of the Church. However perplexing it might be to defend him from the imputation of hazardous notions, and unguarded phraseolo-

\* Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 266.

gy, the whole course of his life, and the *general* tenor of his writings, must unquestionably, acquit him of the character of a political incendiary. Some further reflections, however, on this subject, will find a proper place, when we come to a review of the opinions of Wiclif, and the proceedings of his "Poor Priests," or travelling preachers.

## CHAPTER VII.

1381—1382.

*Wickliff hitherto employed in exposing the corruptions of the Papacy—He now engages in the Sacramental Controversy—Notice of the history of this question—Pascasius Radbert—Bertram and Johannes Scotus—Berengarius—Transubstantiation established by Innocent III.—Metaphysical explanation of it by the Mendicants—This doctrine unknown to the Anglo-Saxon Church—Probably introduced into England at the Conquest—Wickliff attacks the doctrine from the chair of theology—His positions denounced, on pain of excommunication—He appeals to the King—He is desired by John of Gaunt to abstain from the subject—He composes his *Ontololum* or *Wicket*—Courtney succeeds to the Primacy—Synod held by him at the Preaching Friars' in London—The Assembly disturbed by an Earthquake—Address and self-possession of Courtney—Twenty-four Conclusions, ascribed to Wickliff condemned—Measures taken for the suppression of his Doctrines—Petition of the Spiritual Lords against the Lollards—Royal ordinance, empowering Sheriffs to arrest and imprison the Preachers of false doctrine—It is introduced into the Parliament Roll without the consent of Lords or Commons—Further proceedings of the Primate—Wickliff himself not yet summoned before the Archbishop—Possibly still protected by the Duke of Lancaster—Wickliff's complaint to the King and Parliament—Petition of the Commons against the Ordinance for the suppression of erroneous doctrine—Wickliff summoned to answer before the Convention at Oxford—He is abandoned by the Duke of Lancaster—He maintains his opinions—He delivers in two Confessions, one in English, the other in Latin—His English Confession—His Latin Confession—He is banished from Oxford—He retires to Lutterworth—He is summoned by the Pope to appear before him—His answer.*

THE attacks of Wickliff had hitherto been principally directed against enormities, which had long been raising up a spirit of disaffection towards the Romish hierarchy. Up to this time, he had appeared as the advocate of the University, in defence of her privileges—as the champion of the Crown, in the vindication of its rights and prerogatives—as the friend of the people, in the preservation of their pro-

Wickliff hitherto employed in exposing the corruptions of the Papacy.

perty—and as the ally of the whole world, against the abuse of ecclesiastical power. He

He now engages  
in the Sacra-  
mental Contro-  
versy.

was now to appear in a somewhat different, and still more arduous, position.

He was about to carry his operations into the most secret chambers of the great Mystery of Iniquity;—to encounter the ghostly might of an almost invisible, but tremendously powerful adversary;—an adversary the more formidable, because the conflict against it was to be, chiefly, carried on in the regions of metaphysical abstraction, to which the combatant could hardly be followed by the sympathies, or even by the understandings, of mankind. So long as he arraigned the palpable corruptions of the Church, he might be regarded as sustaining the contest in the open day, and under the light of heaven. But a polemic who, in those times, should presume to assail the Romish doctrine of the Eucharist, had an adventure before him, somewhat resembling that of the pagan hero, when he plunged into the den of Cacus, where he had to encounter, not only the might of his antagonist, but the volumes of smoke which he discharged from his jaws; a darkness which aggravated the danger and difficulty of the struggle, and almost entirely concealed it from the gaze of the spectator. Hence it was, that,—so long as Wiclif was seen to grapple with the practices of the Papacy and its adherents, or with those doctrines and principles which were more immediately connected with its visible abuses,—so long he was supported by the patronage of the great, and by the applauses of the many. But when once he plunged into the darkness of the sacramental controversy, the scene of contention was removed from the sphere of general intelligence or interest. He was regarded by many as engaged in desperate opposition to the awful and inscrutable majesty of truth, which, here, demanded the submission of the understanding without appearing to invade the personal comfort or interest of the

believer. They who were loudest in their outcry against the Church, were, in that age, but little disturbed by her most extravagant demands on their credulity. When we are told by the chroniclers, that every second man that might be met on the road was a Lollard, we are not to imagine that the country swarmed with persons whose minds were in a state of insurrection against the extravagances of erroneous belief; but that there prevailed a very general indignation against the pride and greediness of the Pope and his ministers, and an increasing strength of persuasion that the ecclesiastical system required an unsparing reform. We shall accordingly find, that when Wiclif stepped from the ground on which he had hitherto combated, and ascended, as it were, into the mount, where clouds and darkness were gathered round him, his friends and followers began to fall away. The feelings of many of the people towards him somewhat resembled those of the Israelites towards their legislator, when they exclaimed, "as for this Moses, we wot not what is become of him!"

It would be unseasonable, and utterly Notice of the useless, to introduce here a lengthened history of this history of the disputes which had long question. agitated the Church, respecting the mysterious presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharistic elements. That it was present, in some mode or other which sufficiently warranted the faithful to speak of it as *really* present, seems to have been the general and almost unanimous opinion of the Church from the earliest times; although, as may readily be imagined, every attempt to explain this *reality*, and to reconcile it with the notion of a mere sacramental or symbolical presence, was sure to involve the disputants in a labyrinth of perplexity and self-contradiction. Up to the middle of the ninth century, however, as Mosheim observes,\* "both reason and folly

\* Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 340.



had been left free in this matter; nor had any imperious mode of faith suspended the exercise of the one, or restrained the extravagance of the other." The first person who undertook to reduce the doctrine of the Church to certainty and precision, was

Pascasius Radbert.

Pascasius Radbert, a monk, afterwards abbot of Corbey: who maintained, that, after the consecration of the bread and wine, nothing remained of those symbols but the outward figure; under which figure, the very same body that suffered on the cross was *really* and *locally* present. This opinion was speedily opposed by the two eminent divines, Bertram, and Johannes Scotus: but the controversy was still left to exhaust itself, uncontrolled by any definite sentence of the Church. In the eleventh century, when the dispute burst out again, the cause of reason and common sense was vigorously sustained by the celebrated

Berengarius.

Berengarius, Archbishop of Angers, who persisted in teaching that the elements, after consecration, preserved their natural and essential qualities, being nothing more than symbols or representatives of the body and blood of the Saviour. By this time, however, the hierarchy of Rome appear to have become sensible, that the doctrine, which gave to the sacramental rite the character of a prodigy, was admirably fitted to exalt the mystic and hierurgical dignity of the priesthood. The theology of Berengarius was, accordingly, assailed with outrageous vehemence. The terrors of spiritual power were levelled against it, fiercely and angrily by Leo IX. and Nicholas II., somewhat more faintly and doubtfully by Gregory VII. The heretic was compelled to sign, successively, three distinct confessions, each differing from the other, but all of them amounting to an abjuration of his own real opinions; and his latter days were passed in exercises of penitence for his unworthy dissimulation.\* It was not, how-

\* Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 558—569.

ever, till the beginning of the thirteenth century that all liberty of speech and opinion, relative to this subject, was finally suppressed. The Pontiff who claims the honour of this triumph over human reason is Innocent III. In the fourth council of Lateran, (which was held in 1215, and at which were assembled a vast concourse of ecclesiastics, besides the ambassadors of nearly all the powers of Europe,) he formerly established that doctrine, which, to the present hour, is held by the Church of Rome as the only orthodox and true one, and which, from that time, has been uniformly designated by the term transubstantiation. This word, which was unknown before the days of Innocent III., was introduced to express the precise nature of the change effected

The doctrine of transubstantiation established by Innocent III.

in the elements at the moment of consecration. It is obvious that the grand difficulty which thoughtful persons would have to encounter, in receiving the doctrine in question, arose from the astounding circumstance, that the mystic words of the priest left the sensible qualities of the sacramental bread wholly unaltered. That Christ himself should, in some mysterious and spiritual sense, be present at the solemnity, might not be too much for the faith of the most enlightened believer. But, that an actual change should take place, of which the senses should give not the slightest notice,—that the holy thing received by the communicant should still retain precisely the same shape, the same colour, and the same taste, which belonged to the unconsecrated wafer,—was a subject of endless perplexity to all, except those who were prepared for an absolute and unconditional surrender of their faculties to the authority of the Church. In order, therefore, to confound and repel the stubborn testimony of the senses, the Mendicant Orders, who were the creatures of the Pontiff, called in Metaphysics to the aid of Superstition.

Metaphysical explanation of the doctrine by the Mendicants.

They scrupled not to maintain, that, although substances are usually known to us only by their sensible properties, or accidents, yet no substance is, in its own nature, inseparable from its accidents. A miracle might disunite the qualities from their proper subject; and these qualities might continue to act upon our senses, even after the subject itself was destroyed or withdrawn. And such a miracle, they contended, was actually performed at every celebration of the Eucharist. The *substance* of the bread was taken away, the instant the words of consecration had passed the lips of the priest, and the *substance* of Christ's body was introduced in its place. Our senses, it is true, give us no intelligence of this substitution; for our senses take no cognizance of the interior essences of things. The substance of the body of our Lord, when invested with the sensible properties of the wafer, would, consequently, affect the senses precisely as the wafer itself affected them, previously to its consecration. To appeal, therefore, to the evidence of the senses, was, in effect, to call in witnesses which could depose nothing as to the matter in question. And the grand difficulty being thus disposed of, by a process of metaphysical legerdemain, mankind were left without excuse, if they refused the mystery of *transubstantiation*!

This doctrine unknown to the Anglo-Saxon Church. That the corporeal presence of Christ in the sacrament was never acknowledged as an article of faith by our ancient Anglo-Saxon Church, seems to be beyond all reasonable question. The opinion entertained respecting that mystery, previously to the Conquest, is distinctly expressed in a very ancient homily, translated into the Saxon tongue, probably from a Latin original no longer extant, by Ælfrie, abbot of St. Alban's, in the tenth century; and further, from two epistles of the same writer, one of them addressed to Wulfine, bishop of Sherborne, the

other to Wulfstane, archbishop of Canterbury.\* The homily in question contains a copious exposition of the sacramental doctrine; and its language expressly negatives the tenet of transubstantiation. "Much," it says, "is betwixt the body in which Christ suffered, and the body which is hallowed to housell. The body, truly, in which Christ suffered, was born of the flesh of Mary, with a reasonable soul; his ghostly body, which we call the housell, is gathered of many grains, without blood, bone, limb, or soul. And, therefore, nothing is to be understood therein bodily, but all is *ghostly* to be understood."† Again, "Truly it is, as we have said, Christ's body and his blood, not bodily, but *ghostly*: and ye should not search how this is done, but hold it in *your* belief that it is done."‡ Precisely conformable to this is the language of the two epistles. "Understand now that the Lord, who could turn the bread, before his suffering, into his body, and the wine into his blood, *ghostly*, the self-same Lord blesseth daily, through the priest's hands, bread and wine to his *ghostly* body, and his *ghostly* blood."§ "The lively bread is not *bodily* so, notwithstanding,—not the self-same body that Christ suffered in; nor is the holy wine the Saviour's blood which was shed for us in *bodily thing* (or reality,) but in *ghostly understanding*."|| These testimonies are the more remarkable, because they are mixed up with other matters which savour grossly of Romish superstition, and show that the sentiments expressed on the subject of the Eucharist, were dictated by no spirit of opposition to the autho-

\* This Anglo-Saxon homily, and the two epistles above mentioned, also in Anglo-Saxon, were printed by John Day, 1567, under the title of "A Testimony of Antiquitie, showing the auncient faith in the Church of England, touching the Sacrament, &c. &c." They are followed by a certificate of the faithfulness and accuracy with which they were taken from the ancient books, signed by Archbishop Parker, and fifteen other bishops. The copy which I have seen is in the public library of Cambridge. It is in a small volume, (Ff. 16. 78.) and is bound up with several other tracts.

† Testimony of Antiquitie, &c. p. 36.

§ Testimony of Antiquitie, &c. p. 64.

‡ Ibid. p. 38, 39.

|| Ibid. p. 70.

rity of the Church. In the next century, however, The doctrine came the Norman Conquest; and this probably intro- event consigned the see of Canterbury duced into Eng- to the care of Lanfranc, who was not land, at the Con- only a devoted adherent to the Papacy, quest, by Arch- but one of the most eminent and power- bishop. Lanfranc. ful among the antagonists of Berengarius. There is still extant a dissertation of his concerning the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, in which he labours to establish the reality of the corporeal presence, in opposition to the doctrine of the Archbishop of Angers: and, from that period till the days of Wiclif, the Romish doctrine, as first maintained by Radbert, and as subsequently explained and vindicated by the Mendicants, appears to have gradually and silently established itself in our national Church.

There can be little doubt that the sentiments of Wiclif on this point must have long been known to his friends and his parishioners; for the subject is one of perpetual recurrence in his sermons. But it

1381. was from the chair of theology that he commenced his formal attack against the absurdities of the received doctrine, and more especially against the metaphysical wonders introduced by the Friars. In the lectures delivered by him in 1381, he

put forth twelve conclusions, in which he maintained that "the consecrated host we see upon the altar, is neither Christ, nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him; and that transubstantiation, identification, or impanation, rest upon no scriptural ground."\*

By the religious Orders, who were then in high predominance at Oxford, this was regarded as an audacious declaration of war: and a conven-

His positions denounced on pain of excommunication, &c. tion was immediately summoned by the Chancellor, William de Berton, for the purpose of preparing an adverse manifesto. By this assembly, which consisted of twelve

\* Lewis, c. vi. p. 91.

doctors, eight of whom were either monks or mendicants, a solemn decree was unanimously pronounced,\* which first recites the substance of Wiclif's conclusions, (namely, that the material elements remain unaltered after consecration, and that Christ is not *essentially, substantially, or corporeally* present in the sacrament, but only *figuratively, or tropically*;) and then proceeds to declare and affirm the doctrine of transubstantiation, in its fullest extravagance. It concludes by denouncing imprisonment, suspension of scholastic exercises, and the greater excommunication, as the penalties of teaching or listening to the opposite doctrine. The instrument, thus prepared, was not suffered to remain a moment idle. It was dispatched to the school of the Augustines,—where Wiclif was actually seated, as Professor, enforcing the condemned positions,—and was there promulgated in the hearing of his pupils. The suddenness of the invasion threw the Reformer into momentary confusion. He, however, soon recovered his self-possession, defied his adversaries to refute his opinions, and proclaimed <sup>Wiclif appeals to the King.</sup> his resolution to appeal to the king.†

\* This decree is printed, at length, in Wilkins, Conc. vol. iii. p. 170, with the signatures of the twelve doctors, of whom four only are seculars.

† Wilk. Conc. p. 171. We recommend to the attention of Dr. Lingard, (who is pleased to censure the coarseness of Wiclif's invectives,) the mild, pacific, and exemplary language, in which the chronicler Walsingham notices the opinions of the Reformer, on the subject of the Eucharist. "At this time," (A. D. 1381,) he says, "that old hypocrite, that angel of Satan, that emissary of Anti-Christ, the not-to-be named John Wiclif, or rather Wickebeleve, the heretic, continued his ravings, and seemed as if he would drink up Jordan, and plunge all Christians into the abyss, by reviving the damnable opinions of Berengarius, &c. &c." He then tells a story about a certain knight of high repute, near Salisbury, who ran away with the sacrament; and, in order to show that it was no better than so much household bread, irreverently devoured it, together with oysters, and onions, and wine. The knight it seems, survived the sacrilege; but being afterwards brought to a better mind, testified his sorrow, by submission to very heavy penances. And this, says the historian, I have the more fully related, that it may appear what evils were scattered over the land by that beast from the bottomless pit, that colleague of Satan, John Wiclif, or Wickebeleve. It would be difficult to match this from the pages of the monster himself! Wals. p. 266.

This determination appears to have occasioned the greatest astonishment. That a person charged with theological error should think of appealing, not to the Pope, not even to the bishop or ecclesiastical ordinary, but to the Crown, was deemed an act of outrageous contumacy against the spiritual powers. The measure, it must be confessed, was one of singular audacity. Its boldness was too much

He is desired by John of Gaunt to abstain from speaking on the Eucharist.

for the spirit of John of Gaunt himself, the illustrious friend and patron of the Reformer. For no sooner did he receive intelligence of it, than he posted to Oxford for the express purpose of forbidding Wiclif to speak further on this matter; and by this good office, he has purchased for himself, in the chronicles of the age, the title of a sage counsellor, and a faithful son of holy Church.\* His admonitions, it will be seen hereafter, were totally in vain. The only effect produced by the authority of the Primate, the sentence of the Chancellor, and the influence of his protector, was to reduce him to silence, until the opportunity should arrive for removing his cause to the supreme tribunal.

He composes his "*Ostiolum*" or Wicket.

But though his tongue was restrained, his pen continued active. He employed the interval which elapsed before the next meeting of Parliament, in the composition of a small treatise by the title of *Ostiolum*, or the Wicket, the object of which is to expose the manifold contradictions and absurdities adhering to the dogma which he had been forbidden to assail. In this treatise he reprobates without mercy the blasphemous presumption involved in the Popish doctrine of the Eucharist. It was asserted by the clergy that, by virtue of their stupendous function, they were enabled to *create* God

\* "*Post appellationem, advenit nobilis dominus, dux egregius, et miles strenuus, sapiensque Consiliarius, Dux Lancastrie, sacre Ecclesie filius fidelis, prohibens magistro predicto Johanni, quod de cetero non loqueretur de ista materia.*" Wilk. Conc. p. 171.

their *Creator*; and their deduction from these monstrous premises was, that persons invested with such transcendent spiritual powers ought never to be degraded by subjection to any secular authority. It is scarcely possible to listen without a trepidation to such impiety: and yet, bad as it was, Wiclif clearly shows that its enormity was here greatly understated. For if the words of blessing or consecration could effect the wonders ascribed to them, it must inevitably follow that the priests, who pronounced them, must not only be elevated far above all earthly jurisdiction, but must also "wax great masters above Christ himself, and be the dispensers of his substance; so that, since it is written, thou shalt honour thy father and thy mother, Christ would be bound to honour with filial reverence the priests who thus became the fathers and creators of himself!" He, further, exposes, with singular felicity, the absurdity, that each portion of the sacramental bread became the undivided body of Christ. This position was sometimes illustrated by reference to a glass, shattered into a multitude of fragments, each of which might still retain the power of reflecting the same countenance; an explanation which was ingeniously turned by the Reformer against the doctrine of his opponents. Each fragment of the glass, he observed, could present to the eye nothing more than the image of a face, not the very face itself: and even so, each portion of the broken bread might represent the body of Christ, but could do nothing more. Again, he triumphantly asks his adversaries, why they worship not the vine for God, as they do the bread? For Christ has affirmed that he was a vine, in language as express as that in which he declared that the bread was his body, and the cup was his blood. He adds, that literally to identify the bread with Christ's holy body, is no less irrational than the "foul misunderstanding" of the Jews, who perverted the figurative words of Christ, respecting his own body, into



a boast that he could destroy the temple of Jerusalem, and build it in three days.

On the 14th of June, 1381, the See of Canterbury became vacant by the death of Simon Sudbury, who was massacred in the Tower, by the fury of the insurgent peasantry. His successor was William Courtney, then translated from the see of London; a personage highly connected, and distinguished for his passionate devotion to the Papal chair. It was not till the month of May, 1382, that this uncompromising prelate received the pall from Rome; an ensign which, in his estimation, was absolutely needful to the completion of his authority and power. On the 17th of the same

month, a convention of divines was held, by his mandate, at the priory of the Preaching Friars, in London. The assembly consisted of eight bishops and fourteen doctors of civil or canon law, together with seventeen doctors and six bachelors of divinity, all of whom, except one, were either Mendicants or Monks.\* At this meeting the firmness of the Archbishop was severely put to the test. On the commencement of their deliberations, it so happened that the whole city was shaken by an earthquake. The convulsion immediately produced some unsteadiness in the counsels of the Synod, many of whom appeared to regard it as a sign of the displeasure of heaven against their proceedings. The sinking fortitude of the divines would probably have caused a dissolution of the assembly, had not the Primate, with singular address and self-possession, converted the portent to his own advantage. He assured them that the commotion they had witnessed, being produced by the expulsion of noxious vapours from the earth, was evidently a

1382.  
Synod held by  
him, at the  
Preaching Fri-  
ars, London.

The assembly  
disturbed by an  
earthquake.

Address and  
self-possession  
of Courtney.

\* See Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 158.

most auspicious intimation, that the purity and the peace of the Church could be secured only by the violent removal of all rebellious spirits from her communion. The courage of the assembly being thus effectually rallied, they proceeded with their work of inquisition. Twenty-four conclusions were produced, which, it was affirmed, Twenty-four conclusions, ascribed to Wiclif, condemned. had been publicly preached among the nobles and commons of the realm of England; and after three days of "good and mature deliberation," ten of these conclusions were condemned as heretical, and the remaining fourteen were pronounced to be erroneous.\* The errors of the heretical articles related chiefly to the sacrament, and the mass—to the forfeiture of the priestly function and power by mortal sin—to the needlessness of auricular confession—to the unlawfulness of temporal possessions held by the clergy—and to the derivation of the Pope's authority from the Emperor: and one of those articles actually contained the monstrous assertion, that God ought to obey the devil! The fourteen erroneous propositions, in substance, maintained that it was *heretical* for a prelate, to excommunicate any one without knowing him to be already excommunicated by God, and *treasonable* to excommunicate one who has appealed to the King; that the Gospel may be preached without license from Pope or prelate—that tithes are purely eleemosynary—that delinquent priests may be stripped of their endowments by the secular power—that to give alms to the friars is an excommunicable offence—and that the religious Orders, whether endowed or mendicant, are sinful and unchristian.

Instructions were speedily dispatched to the bishops of London and of Lincoln, enjoining them rigorously to suppress the dissemination of these doctrines: and, by the Measures taken for the suppression of Wiclif's doctrines. latter of these prelates, letters mandatory

\* These conclusions may be seen in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 157, 158, together with the signatures of the parties who condemned them.

were immediately issued, charging with the execution of the decree, not only the abbots and priors, but all the clergy, and ecclesiastical functionaries throughout the archdeaconry of Leicester, within which the rectory of Lutterworth is situated; so that the Reformer was, in all probability, personally visited with these paternal admonitions. Similar instructions were forwarded by the archbishop to one Peter Stokes, a zealous Carmelite of Oxford, requiring him diligently to publish the decisions of the Synod throughout the University. And, in order that the crusade might be conducted with all impressive solemnity, it was appointed that, at the ensuing Whitsuntide, the devotion of the metropolis should be awakened by a religious procession to St. Paul's. On the day fixed, a long train, both of ecclesiastics and laymen, was seen moving bare-footed, towards the cathedral; and on their arrival there, the pulpit was mounted by a Carmelite friar, who spoke to the astonished multitude of the perils of the Church, of the virulence of her enemies, and of the duty incumbent, in such a crisis, on all her faithful children. These vigorous measures of the primate were abundantly seconded by the zeal of the spiritual lords of Parliament, who united in a

petition of the spiritual lords against the Lollards. <sup>petition that a remedy might be provided against the innumerable errors and impieties of the *Lollards*.\*</sup> The doc-

trines complained of in addition to those which have been already stated, were,—that Urban VI. is the son of Anti-Christ, and that there hath been no true Pope since the days of St. Silvester—that they who trust in the Pope's indulgences are accursed, and that none are obliged to obey his canons decretal—that the worship of images is idolatrous and execrable—that pictures of the Holy Trinity are

\* It would be a waste of time to detain the reader with a dissertation on the origin of this term, here applied to the followers of Wiclif. Every thing that can be collected on the subject may be found in Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 365—368.

not to be endured—that Saints are not to be supplicated for their intercession—that priests and deacons are bound by their orders to preach, although they have no cure of souls—that the clergy who do not minister the sacraments are to be removed—and lastly, in this long list of heresies and errors, that “ecclesiastical men ought not to ride on such great horses, nor use so large jewels, precious garments, or delicate entertainments, but to renounce them all, and give them to the poor, walking on foot, and taking staves in their hands, to take on them the appearance of poor men, giving others the benefit of their example.”

This application was attended with one very remarkable consequence. It produced a Royal Ordinance, which,—after reciting the activity and audacity with which notorious and pernicious errors were circulated, by evil persons, under dissimulation of great holiness, preaching in churches, churchyards, markets, fairs, and other open places, without the license of the ordinary,—empowers the sheriffs of counties to arrest such preachers and their abettors, and to detain them in prison, until they should justify themselves according to law, and reason of Holy Church.\* This document, it should be observed, was altogether destitute of the force of law; for it contains no intimation whatever, of the assent either of Lords or Commons. It, nevertheless, was introduced into the Parliament Roll, among the statutes of the year; and has the distinction of being the first penal enactment on our Statute Book, against heretical pravity of opinion. In the next Parliament, indeed, the Commons declared, that it had been passed without their assent or concurrence, and prayed that it might be

Royal Ordinance, empowering the Sheriffs to arrest and imprison the Preachers of false doctrine.

This Ordinance introduced into the Parliament Roll, though without the consent of Lords or Commons.

\* The document is given by Fox. See Wordsworth's *Eccl. Biog.* vol. i. p. 62, 63.

annulled, as it never was their intent to bind themselves to the bishops, more than their ancestors had been bound in times past. But though the King agreed to their petition, this spurious statute "still remains among our laws, unrepealed, except by desuetude, and by inference from acts of much later times."\*

Proceedings  
of the Primate  
against certain  
of Wiclif's fol-  
lowers.

Armed with this formidable, but most unlawful power, the Primate assumed the title of Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity throughout the whole province of Canterbury; and immediately directed his attention to the extirpation of heresy from the University of Oxford. The Sessions, at the Grey Friars, were accordingly resumed. The most peremptory instructions were issued to the Chancellor of Oxford, Robert Rigge, commanding him to suppress all attendance on the preaching of certain persons, vehemently and notoriously suspected of heresy, naming, particularly, John Wiclif, and several of his followers, Hereford, Repingdon, Ashton, and Redman. And as the chancellor himself had recently manifested a disposition to favour some of the objectionable doctrines, he received from the Archbishop a reiterated and solemn injunction, to abstain from all interference with the proceedings of those divines, who had been appointed to inquire and report respecting the state of religious opinion at Oxford. For the rest of their session the Synod were occupied with the cases of the individuals above named;† but it is somewhat remarkable, that Wiclif himself was, on this occasion, suffered to remain unmolested, while his friends were exposed to all the bitter consequences of their activity in the promulgation of his principles. This may, perhaps, be accounted for by the circumstance of his having declared his resolu-

\* Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 132, 133. Fox, in *Wordsworth's Eccl. Biog.* vol. i. p. 63.

† The proceedings against them may be found in *Wilk. Conc.* vol. tit. p. 168—169.

tion to appeal to the Crown : for, however disputable might be the regularity of such an appeal, it might be thought scarcely respectful to the Royal authority, wholly to disregard it. It has also been conjectured, that Wiclif's doctrinal heresies had not entirely deprived him of the favour of the Duke of Lancaster, an antagonist too powerful to be rashly encountered, even by the high-born and inflexible Archbishop. <sup>Possibly still protected by the Duke of Lancaster.</sup> The thunders which were echoing round him, were, however, unable to silence or intimidate the Reformer. That his voice was lifted up, among his own people, against the recent attempts to summon the powers of the State in aid of the authorities of the Church, seems evident from the language of one of his parochial homilies, in all probability delivered about this period. He is speaking of the entombment of Christ, and of the abortive devices by which the priesthood conspired to prevent his resurrection : and these desperate expedients he produces, as illustrative of the attempts of the prelates to suppress the revival of the Gospel of Christ. "Even thus," he exclaims, "do our high priests ; lest God's law, after all they have done, should be *quickened*. Therefore make they statutes, stable as a rock ; and they obtain grace of knights to confirm them ; and this they well mark with the witness of lords : and all, lest the truth of God's Law, hid in the sepulchre, should break out, to the knowing of the common people. O Christ ! Thy Law is hidden thus ; when wilt Thou send Thine Angel to remove the stone, and shew Thy truth unto thy flock ? Well I know that knights have taken gold in this case, to help that thy Law may be thus hid, and Thine ordinances consumed : but well I know that, at the day of doom, it shall be manifest, and even before, when Thou arisest against all thine enemies."\*

\* MS. Hom. Bib. Reg. quoted by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 26.

But it was not to be supposed that Wiclif, who had proclaimed, in the face of the world, his resolution to *appeal to Caesar*, would content himself with an *appeal* to his parishioners. In conformity with his

declaration, in the following November, 1382, he presented his complaint, which was addressed not to the Crown only, but to the King and Parliament.\*

On a perusal of this paper, it will appear evident that he seized the opportunity, thus afforded him, of bringing before the Legislature, not merely the sacramental question, but nearly the whole substance of the cause, which it had been the work of his life to advocate and support. He divides his *Gravamina* into four main articles. The first of these exposes the absurdity of maintaining that a rule of religious life can be laid down by man, more perfect than that which is delivered to us by Jesus Christ and his Apostles; and he thus strikes at the very root of the authority and influence, claimed, in that age, by those various religious Orders, to which nearly all the reverence of the Christian world was then transferred. The second enlarges on the power of the secular magistrate over the temporal endowments of the Church; in opposition to the doctrine, then very generally held, and recently affirmed by certain friars at Coventry, that the possessions of the clergy were absolutely beyond the jurisdiction of the State, and that to maintain the contrary, was damnably erroneous and heretical. In the third article, he adverts, certainly in very unmeasured language, to what has been represented by some as one of his favourite doctrines, viz., that every thing enjoyed by the clergy,

\* This document is in print. It is entitled, "A complaint of John Wyclif, exhibited to the King and Parliament." It is not always to be met with separately. The copy consulted by me is to be found in a volume of *Tracts*, in the public Library of Cambridge, (Ff. 14. 8.,) together with Wiclif's Treatise against the Orders of Friars, (which was published in the following year, 1383,)—Dr. James's Apologie for John Wiclif,—and several other pieces of various dates.

more than may be needful for the most moderate necessities of nature, is nothing better than "*theft, rapine, and sacrilege*;" and that if the prelates and priests be infected with the sins of idolatry, of covetousness, of pride, simony, *man-quelling*, gluttony, drunkenness, and lechery, they thereby incur, according to God's law, the forfeiture of their tithes and offerings; which, in that case, may lawfully be given to poor and needy men. The fourth article is the only one in this paper, in which he adverts to the question, respecting which he had declared, at Oxford, his determination to make this appeal; namely, the doctrine of the Eucharist: and it is remarkable, that, on this point, he abstains from all diffuseness either of statement or of argument. He contents himself with simply desiring, that "Christ's teaching and beleave of the sacrament of His own body, that is plainly taught by Christ and his Apostles, in Gospels and Pistles, may be taught openlie in churches of Christian people; the contrarie teaching, and false believe being brought up by cursed hypocrites, and heretics, and worldly priests, unkenning in God's law; which seem that they are Apostles of Christ, but are *fools*!" He had, no doubt, the sagacity to perceive, that an elaborate exhibition of the merits of this question, would involve the necessity of such profound research, and metaphysical discussion, as would be quite out of place before the barons, knights, and burgesses of the realm, who might yet be fully qualified to estimate the more popular topics upon which he had been enlarging. His "Complaint" closes with an animated protest against the selfishness of the priesthood, who, he says, were "so busie about worldlie occupation, that they seemen better bayliffs, or reves, than ghostly priests of Jesus Christ." This appeal was speedily followed by the petition of the Commons, already adverted to, protesting against the Royal Ordi-

Petition of the Commons against the Ordinance for the suppression of erroneous doctrine.



nance, by which the civil authorities were converted into instruments to be wielded by the hierarchy, and employed for the extirpation of heresy. Respecting this enactment, they complain, as we have seen, that whatever was moved therein, was without their assent; and they, accordingly, require its abrogation. With this requisition, the King, to all appearance, willingly complied; but, unfortunately, the unlawful enactment had, in a great measure, done its office. It had given a powerful impulse to the work of religious persecution; and, notwithstanding its repeal, it was still allowed to retain its place on the records of Parliament, in consequence, as some have imagined, of the sinister practices of the Archbishop. But, however that may be, Wiclif derived but little benefit from this manifestation of displeasure on the part of the Commons. He was summoned to answer before the Convocation, at Oxford, respecting the opinions expressed in the Articles of his "Complaint;" and the doctrine propounded by him, relative to the Eucharist, formed the most prominent subject of inquisition. The integrity and fortitude of Wiclif were now put to a much severer test than any to which they had yet been exposed. In his former perils, it might be suggested that his courage was mainly supported by his secret reliance on the Duke of Lancaster's protection. His bitterest adversaries were now deprived of the comfort of that insinuation. The Duke of Lancaster openly abandoned him.\* His illustrious patron (who stood faithfully by him so long as he was engaged in a conflict with the open

Wiclif summoned to answer before the Convocation at Oxford.

He is abandoned by the Duke of Lancaster.

insinuation. The Duke of Lancaster openly abandoned him.\* His illustrious patron (who stood faithfully by him so long as he was engaged in a conflict with the open

\* The language of the Sudbury Register (as we have seen above) is "*Post appellationem advenit Dux Lancastrie . . . prohibens quod de cætero non loqueretur de istâ materiâ.*" Willk. Con. p. 171. But I am not altogether certain, whether this means that the Duke came to Wiclif for this purpose, after he proclaimed, at Oxford, his resolution to appeal; or, not till after he had actually presented his complaint to the King and Parliament: most probably the former.

iniquities of the Papacy,) refused to attend him into these mysterious regions of theological debate. He was unwilling to encounter the wrath of the hierarchy, for the sake of barren questions relative to faith or doctrine. On this occasion, therefore, it may be fairly said of Wiclif, that "no man stood with him, but all forsook him." The displeasure of his patron, however, was as powerless with him, as the thunders of his spiritual adversaries; and the fidelity and courage with which he acquitted himself in this hour of peril, may be known from the words of his enemies themselves. According to their account, he produced a confession, containing, substantially, all his former errors; and, like an incorrigible heretic, refused all the doctors of the Second Millenary, on the question of the Sacrament of the Altar; affirming that, with the exception of Berengarius, they were involved in error; nay, that Satan was loosed, and had put forth his power, in the person of the Master of the Sentences, and of all who had preached the Catholic faith herein.\*

It must not, however, be dissembled, that one historian has given a very different aspect to this portion of Wiclif's history. He maintains that hitherto Wiclif had relied *solely* on the protection of the duke, and that nothing but his patronage had saved the heretic and his adherents from ignominy and destruction; that when he was called upon to answer for his perversions, "he *instantly* laid aside his audacious bearing, put on the breastplate of dotage, attempted to disclaim his extravagant and fantastic

\* — "Incepit confessionem quandam facere, in quâ continebatur omnis error pristinus, (sed secretius sub velamine vario verborum) in quâ dixit suum conceptum, et nisus est suam sententiam probare. Sed, velut hæreticus pertinax, reputavit omnes doctores de Secundo Millenario, in materiâ de Sacramento altaris; et dixit omnes errasse præter Berengarium. . . . Dixit patâam Sathanam solutum, et potestatem habere in Magistro Sententiarum, et in omnibus, qui fidem Catholicam prædicaverunt." Sudbury Register, in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 171.

errors, and protested that the follies he was called upon to answer for, were basely and falsely ascribed to him by the malicious ingenuity of his enemies."\* This calumny has been so frequently repeated, that, to the present hour, there are many who, while they are disposed to honour and venerate his memory, yet complain that a mist of suspicion still hangs over this passage of his life, and impairs the clearness of their confidence in his integrity. That our readers may be enabled to judge of these imputations of du-

*Delivers in two confessions, one in English, the other in Latin.*

plicity, it will be proper to call their attention to the two written confessions, one in English, the other in Latin, which contain the substance of his defence before the convocation at Oxford.

*His English confession.*

His confession in English is a concise, and tolerably perspicuous document; framed as it would seem, with a view to convey his sentiments to the popular apprehension, and accordingly weeded from the subtlety of scholastic distinctions. In this paper he affirms, that the sacrament of the altar is *very God's body* in form of bread; and that if it be broken into three parts, or into a thousand, every one of these is the same *God's body*: and he adds, that it is heresy to believe that this sacrament is God's body, and no bread, since in truth, it is *both together*; in its own nature it is very bread; but *sacramentally*, it is the body of Christ. And he scruples not to affirm his belief that the earth trembled, when the council was held at the Grey Friars in London, in testimony of God's anger at the heresies maintained by his judges in that assembly. Such will be found to be the substance of this confession;† and what infatuation could have enabled Knighton to find in this document a disclaimer of Wiclif's opinions, it is beyond all ordinary penetration to discover. In the *spirit* of it, most assuredly, there is

\* Knighton, p. 2647.

† It is printed in Lewis, c. vi. p. 102—104, from Knighton 2649, 2650.

nothing which savours of cowardice : for he tells his inquisitors to their face, that their perversions were so monstrous as to call down sensible tokens of the divine displeasure. In the *letter* of it, there is nothing to arraign him of duplicity ; for the doctrine here maintained, is, in fact, no other than that which he had uniformly asserted, both before the University at Oxford, and before his people at Lutterworth. If it be urged that there is inconsistency on the face of this paper, since it affirms, in one part, that the sacrament is Christ's body *verily*, and in another, that it is so only *sacramentally*, or spiritually,—the obvious answer is, that if this be an inconsistency, it is one which he had in common with multitudes who spoke or wrote on the subject, ages before the transubstantiating theory was ever heard of : nay, he may almost be said to have it, in common with our own Reformers, whose catechism declares that the body and blood of Christ are *verily and indeed* taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper. How these expressions are to be reconciled, is a question totally distinct. But nothing can be more certain than the fact that they have been considered as capable of reconciliation by numbers who never dreamed of a corporeal and local presence ; and if so, it is extravagant to produce this language, as a proof of Wiclif's timidity and vacillation. The assertion that the body of Christ, in its full integrity, is present in every fragment into which the elements may be divided, is, at first sight, somewhat more perplexing. The perplexity, however, will vanish, when we find that such, very nearly, was the language held even by the Church of our Anglo-Saxon forefathers,—a Church which, beyond dispute, was, on this point, free from superstitious pravity. Without any controversy to maintain,—without any inquisitors to propitiate,—the following is the manner in which the author of the Saxon homily, above adverted to, expresses himself respecting the sacrament of the

altar: "The housell is corruptible, and divided into sundry parts, cut by the teeth, and sent into the stomach; nevertheless, *after ghostly might, it is all in every part.* Many receive that holy body; and yet it is so, *all in every part,* after ghostly mystery. Though some take less (than others,) yet is there no more might in the more part than in the less; *because it is in all men after the invisible might.*"\* No man who has perused the rest of the discourse can doubt, for a moment, that the words above recited were designed to convey this sense,—namely, that, however minutely the sacramental elements might be divided, each portion would be equally efficacious in conveying to the respective communicants, the benefits (whatever they might be,) attached to the due receiving of Christ's body. Why, then, is a more Popish meaning to be given to the words of Wiclif, when he says that, whether the host be broken into three parts, or into a thousand, of each part it may be predicated, with equal truth, that it is the same body of Christ?

His Latin confession.

The Latin confession† drawn up by Wiclif, on this occasion, is very much longer than the English one, and very much more defective in simplicity. Being composed more particularly for understandings accustomed to the worse than Cretan labyrinth of the Schools, it has, from the beginning to the end of it, the appearance of a series of metaphysical and scholastic enigmas. It begins with avowing, distinctly, that the body of Christ, (the same which was born of the Virgin, suffered on the cross, was buried, rose again, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God) is *truly* and *really* the sacramental bread and consecrated host. But then he proceeds to qualify this statement by the confession, that he dares not affirm it to be the body of Christ, *essentially, substantially, corporeally,*

\* Testimonie of Antiquitie, p. 37, 38.

† This Latin Confession is printed in Lewis, Appendix No. 21, p. 323

or *identically*; and in order to make the matter *quite* intelligible, he tells us that there are three modes in which the body of our Lord may exist in the sacrament, namely,—the virtual, the spiritual, and the sacramental: and three modes more true and real than the former, in which it may exist in heaven,—the substantial, the corporeal, and the dimensional. Then he plunges us into a perfect *jungle* of argumentation, in which I profess myself unable to see my own way, and through which I, therefore, will not attempt to conduct the reader. He emerges, however, at precisely the same conclusion on which he takes his stand in his English confession; namely, that the venerable sacrament of the altar, is, *naturally* bread and wine, *sacramentally* the body and blood of Christ; and that the notion, that the Eucharist is a mere accident separated from its proper subject, involves both absurdity and heresy. He concludes, by affirming that the *priests of Baal*, with a mendacity worthy of the school of their father, magnify the consecration of these *accidents*, reckon all masses but their own unworthy to be heard, and pronounce unfit for graduation all who dissent from their impostures; and he expresses his confidence, that truth shall finally overcome them.

Here then, it may again be asked, where are the proofs of Wiclif's defection from his own cause? All the mazes and doublings of his scholastic logic conduct him, somehow or other, to the very position which was assailed by his adversaries: a position which he here maintains without a symptom of unsteadiness or terror; for he openly stigmatizes his persecutors as priests of Baal, and ministers of the father of lies! From the charge of confusion, and apparent inconsistency, it may perhaps be a matter of much more difficulty to vindicate his statements. Righteously and fully to estimate his merits or demerits, in this particular, would probably require the application of a mind, as familiarly conversant as his

own with the barbarous jargon of the schools, and with the modes of reasoning, and the habits of thought, then universally prevalent in the seminaries of learning and theology. There is, also, another consideration, which no one should, for a moment, lose sight of, who would profitably and impartially examine this, or any other passage, in the history of the sacramental controversy. From a very early period, this venerable rite was spoken of as a most awful mystery.\* There seems to have prevailed, in all ages, an extreme anxiety to avoid every mode of speech which might lower its dignity and solemnity in the estimation of the people. The language of the ancient fathers bears emphatic testimony to the existence of this feeling. It frequently is such, as to identify the hallowed elements with the sacrifice they represented.†

\* In the liturgy ascribed to St. James, the sacramental symbols are called *ἁγία ἁγιασθέντα, τίμια, ἱεραγάνια, ἁρόματα, ἔχραντα, ἐνδοξα, φοβερά, φρικτά, θεία*. By various Christian writers they are designated by the following names: *λειτουργία· σὺναξις· μυστήριον θεῖον· ἱερουργία· θεία καὶ θεῖο ποιοῦς χάρις· δῶρον ἐξιτήριον· ἐφόδιον· μέσσις· δοχὴ· λατρεία· εὐλογία· εὐχαριστία· τελετή τελετῶν*. *Dominicum; hostia hostiarum; mysterium mysteriorum*.

The disposition of Christians, of almost every sect, to see in the Eucharist all that was awful and precious, is strikingly illustrated by J. Taylor:—"The beholders of a dove walking the sunshine, as they stand in several aspects and distances, some see red, and others purple, others perceive nothing but green, but all allow and love the beauties: so do the several forms of Christians, as they are instructed by their first teachers, or their own experience, conducted by their fancy and proper principles, look upon these glorious mysteries, some as virtually containing the reward of obedience; some as solemnities of thanksgiving, and records of blessing; some as the objective increase of faith; others as sacramental participations of Christ; others as acts and instruments of natural union; yet all affirm some great thing or other of it, and, by their very differences, confess the immensity of the glory."

† "When you see this body before you," says the most eloquent of the Greek Fathers, in speaking of the sacred elements, "say to yourself, *this* is the body which was nailed to the cross, but which death could not confine. It was *this* which the sun beheld fixed to the accursed tree, and instantly veiled his light. It was *this* that rent the veil, and burst the rocks, and convulsed the earth. Do you wish to comprehend the full extent of its powers? Ask the daughter of affliction who touched the hem of the garment that encircled it. Ask the sea which bore this body on the surface. Ask Satan himself—'What has inflicted on thee this incurable wound? What has robbed thee of thy strength? Whence these chains and this captivity?' He will answer, that *this* crucified body is the foe

When speaking with didactic caution, they would carefully separate the symbol from the object signified; but when endeavouring to elevate the devotion of their congregations, they often forgot this watchfulness and discretion, and expressed themselves in terms which, frequently repeated, would naturally familiarize the hearers with the notion, that the body of our Saviour was actually and locally present, in the consecrated bread and wine; and thus it was, that the impassioned eloquence of the preachers grew, imperceptibly, into the doctrine of the Church. The consequences of this may easily be imagined. In the process of time, it imposed upon divines the hopeless task of reconciling the language of rhetoric with that of metaphysics. They dreaded to speak of the presence of Christ's body in the sacrament, as otherwise than *real*, lest they should thereby degrade that heavenly mystery; and yet they felt themselves compelled to acknowledge, almost in the same breath, that this presence was but figurative and spiritual, lest they should seem to contend for a presence strictly local and corporeal. Hence the inextricable confusion of this department of the ancient theology of

that hath broken his weapons, and hath bruised his head, and hath exposed to shame and defeat the principalities and powers of his kingdom. Ask Death, and say unto him,—‘How hast thou been rifled of thy sting, and how hath thy victory been wrested from thee? How is it that thou hast become the laughing-stock of youths and maidens—thou that wast the terror both of the ungodly and the righteous?’ They will both answer by accusing *this* mysterious body of their discomfiture and disgrace. For when this body was crucified, then the dead arose—and the prison of the grave was burst open—and the tenants of the tomb were set free—and the warders of hell were terror-stricken.” And, again, still more strongly—“Behold, I shew you here, not angels, nor archangels, nor the heaven of heavens,—but the Master of all these! Behold—the most precious of all things is exposed to your gaze;—and, not only so, but you are allowed to touch it, and to handle it; nay—not merely to touch it, but actually to feed upon it.”—Chrysost. Hom. xxliii. in 1 Cor. vol. x. p. 217—219. Ed. Bened.

This sort of fervid and poetical theology, was well fitted to prepare the glowing imagination of the Greeks and Asiatics, for the highest mysteries of the sacramental doctrine; and the only wonder is, that the tenet of transubstantiation should have first made its appearance in the Western, rather than in the Eastern Church.



Europe. Hence the darkness and perplexity of this confession of Wiclif. There can be very little doubt that many sincere, and many profound thinkers, found no refuge from the difficulties which had gathered round the question, but in the bottomless pit of Transubstantiation. Into this abyss, however, Wiclif refused to plunge. Urged as he was to the edge of the gulf by his adversaries, he always stubbornly wheeled round again, and buried himself once more in the labyrinth of his scholastic metaphysics. The fault of his Latin confession, accordingly, is,—not that it contains a recantation of his opinions,—but, that it bristles all over with the thorns and brambles which grew up naturally in the wilderness through which he wandered. And, whatever may be the entanglement of his logic, he contrives to scramble through it to the very point, against which the assaults of his antagonists are directed; and when he is once there, he, loudly and scornfully, defies them to dislodge him.

That his Confessions did not, in the estimation of his Inquisitors, or their adherents, amount to any thing like an abandonment of his principles, may be safely concluded from the fact, that he was assailed by six several antagonists immediately after their publication.\* It may, also, be inferred, from the result of the proceedings against him. His judges, indeed, did not consign him to martyrdom. The heretic was, now, well stricken in years; age and toil together had done their work on his constitution; and a few winters more would rid the Church of him that troubled her. It was scarcely worth the hazard of popular commotion and discontent, to light up the fires of persecution for a victim whom the course of nature would probably soon remove. Besides, neither the Church nor the State of England were as yet familiar with the work of blood; and it might have

\* Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 49.

been dangerous to begin it with one who was not only venerable for his years, but still honoured for his labours and his services. Under these circumstances, it would be a sufficient triumph for the hierarchy to separate their enemy for ever from the most illustrious scene of his warfare; and letters were accordingly obtained from the King which condemned him to banishment from the University of Oxford. The short remnant of his days was passed in the retirement of Lutterworth; and was divided between the discharge of his pastoral care, and the continued toils of his study. Passes the remainder of his days at Lutterworth. Neither time nor infirmity could abate the fire of his devotion to the cause of truth; and to the very last, he laboured by his writings to give a wider diffusion to his principles.

Somewhere about this time it was that Wiclif received a summons from the Pope, Urban VI. commanding him to appear before him in person, and there to defend himself from the imputation of heretical doctrines. His answer to this mandate is a very curious document. He was then suffering from paralysis, and was thus disabled for so formidable a journey. In his reply, however, he does not content himself with declining to obey the citation; but seizes the opportunity of offering to the Pontiff much salutary and unceremonious advice. He is summoned by the Pope to appear before him. He professes his joyful readiness to give account of his faith to all true men, and especially to the Pope, whom he acknowledges to be the highest Vicar that Christ has on earth; adding, however, that his greatness is not to be estimated by his worldly pomp, but by his more eminent conformity to the law of Christ; who, while on earth, was the poorest of men "both in spirit and in having." It was therefore, he submitted, most wholesome counsel, that his Holiness should leave his worldly lordship to worldly lords, and move speedily all his clerks to do the same; and if this His answer.

opinion of his should be found erroneous he was willing to be amended, even by death, if it were needful. He protests that if he might travel in person, he would with God's will, go to the Pope; but Christ had "needed" him to the contrary; and to Christ's will it became both him and the Pope to submit,—unless the Pope were willing to set up openly for Anti-christ.\*

\* This letter is to be found in Lewis, Appendix, No. 23. p. 332.

It so happens that Mr. Soames's Bampton Lecture for 1830, did not fall in my way, until after the above pages had been sent to the press. I should, otherwise, have gladly seized the opportunity of acknowledging, in the proper place, the obligations conferred on our Church by that valuable writer, in his "Inquiry into the Doctrines of the Anglo-Saxon Church." It is in his seventh sermon that Mr. Soames exhibits "that adamantine chain of testimonies,—extending unbroken from Bede to the Norman Conquest,—which proves, even to demonstration, that ancient England was taught expressly to deny the leading distinctive doctrine of modern Rome;"—the doctrine which, upwards of four centuries after the Conquest, Wiclif intrepidly laboured to overthrow.

## CHAPTER VIII.

1382—1384.

*Continued labours of Wiclif in his retirement—Crusade for Urban VI. under the command of Spencer, Bishop of Norwich—Its failure—Wiclif's "Objections to the Freres"—He condemns the Crusade—His opinions respecting the lawfulness of wars—He conceives his life to be in danger from his enemies—His death—His character—Traditions respecting him at Lutterworth—His preferments not inconsistent with his notions respecting clerical possessions—Wiclif not a political Churchman—Admirable for his personal piety, as well as for his opposition to Romish abuse—His unwearied energy—Probable effect of the scholastic discipline on his mind—alleged coarseness of his invectives—Comparison of Wiclif with Luther—Prevalence of Wiclif's doctrines at Oxford after his death—The testimonial of the University in honour of his memory, in 1406—Question of its authenticity considered—Persecution of Wiclif's memory by the Papal writers—Prevalence of his opinions in Bohemia—His remains disinterred by a decree of the Council of Constance.*

THE palsy which disabled Wiclif for attendance on the Pope, was, fortunately, <sup>1382.</sup> not severe enough to suspend, for a moment, the laborious exercise of his mental powers. Nothing can well be more surprising than the unwearied activity with which he continued to assail, from the retirement of his parsonage, the manifold abuses of the Ecclesiastical system. To write completely the history of the two last years of his life, would, in fact, be to enumerate and to analyze a long series of publications, following each other in the closest order, and exhibiting proofs of unexhausted zeal and power. Besides his ordinary labours for the pulpit, there are fourteen or fifteen of his treatises, several of them among the most important of his writings, the publication of which may safely be assigned to this very period. Whether the whole of these were actually composed during the interval is

<sup>1382.</sup>  
Continued labours of Wiclif after his retirement.

question,—or whether they were partly prepared before, and then wrought up and finished,—it is now scarcely possible to ascertain. But the date of their appearance before the world seems to be fixed to this time, beyond all reasonable doubt, by their occasional allusion to preceding circumstances and events. The spectacle they present to us is singularly interesting and admirable. They set before us the example of a man worn down by a life of toil and anxiety—smitten with a malady which might seem to command a cessation of all harassing exertion—just escaped from the very jaws of destruction,—and constantly expecting, (as the tenor of his latest writings seems plainly to intimate,) that Persecution would soon be ready to do her worst upon him—and yet learning no lesson of indolence or cowardice from these perils and troubles. On the contrary, his energies appeared, if any thing, to gather strength and brightness, as the shadows of death were thickening round his temples. Never, perhaps, since the commencement of his warfare, was Wiclif more formidable, than during the season of his final banishment to Lutterworth. Never was his voice more loudly raised in the cause of Scriptural truth, than at the approach of that hour which was to silence it for ever.

1383.  
Crusade in support of Urban VI under the command of Spencer, bishop of Norwich.

We have seen that, on a former occasion, the danger which threatened Wiclif and his followers was powerfully diverted by the grand Papal schism which began to distract the attention of all Europe. The same cause of confusion still continued in unabated operation; and at this time manifested itself in a mode very curiously illustrative of the spirit of the age. England was, at that period, the leading State which supported the claims of Urban VI. to the Papacy, in opposition to those of Clement; and the manner in which her patronage was exerted, was such as to show, that the principles of religious reformation, however vigorously infused

by Wiclif and his adherents, had as yet but very imperfectly mixed themselves with the moral circulation of the English people. A crusade was proclaimed for the purpose of establishing the title of the rightful Pontiff; and, the cause being eminently sacred, it was thought that an ecclesiastic was unquestionably the properest person to conduct it. Accordingly, the individual fixed upon to take the command of the British forces employed on this expedition was Henry Spencer, the youthful Bishop of Norwich; a man, in some respects, signally qualified for such a charge. He was of high birth, unimpeachable orthodoxy, notorious for his inflexible devotion to the interests of the Church, and celebrated for that spirit of martial enterprise which, in those times, was regarded as no ungraceful accompaniment to the spiritual function. His detestation of Lollardism was such as to render him worthy of a place in the commission assembled in the chamber of the Preaching Friars, and rendered for ever memorable by the earthquake which had nearly confounded its proceedings. His martial quality had found an opportunity for display during the fearful insurrection of the peasantry, and was said to have been mainly instrumental in preserving his own diocese from the dreadful effects of that commotion. Instead of confining himself, on that occasion, to a warfare whose *weapons were not carnal*, he put forth *the arm of flesh* with undaunted confidence and vigour. The spiritual guide was forgotten in the feudal baron; and, at the head of his vassals, the adventurous Prelate taught "the ribald multitude," (as he styled them,) to respect the laws, which the supineness or the panic of the government had exposed to most disgraceful outrage. There is something almost diverting in the description of this bellipotent Churchman, given by the annalist, who, with manifest satisfaction, records his exploits. He is represented to us as "armed to the very nails—grasping his lance in his right-hand—

burying his spurs in the flanks of his charger—rushing with the fury of a wild boar into the midst of the rascal crowd, and there dealing confusion and havoc around him,” until victory declared for the mailed functionary of sanctity and peace.\* Such was the remarkable personage entrusted with the championship of Urban VI. He went forth to the adventure armed with all the might, and all the magic, wherewith the superstition of the age could encircle him. A public mandate was issued by the Primate,† calling for the prayers of the faithful on behalf of an enterprise, which had for its object the extermination of the heretics: and, (what was of infinitely greater importance and efficacy,) “marvellous indulgences”‡ were placed by Urban at the disposal of the Bishop, which enabled him to collect an incredible amount of treasure; towards which, the faith and bounty of the female sex supplied the most prodigal contributions. By these stupendous absolutions, both the quick and the dead were released from the guilt and the punishment of sin, provided always that the liberality of the living was fully commensurate to the extent of the benefit conferred. And that nothing might be wanting to stimulate the believers to profusion it was fearlessly affirmed by many of the Bishop’s commissaries, that angels would descend from heaven, at their word, to snatch the souls of the guilty from the abodes of purgatory, and to conduct them without delay to the realms of bliss.§ It would be alien from the purpose of the present work to introduce a narrative of this expedition. It must be enough to say, that the impetuous Churchman proved, after all, but a very sorry captain. The vulgar attribute of courage, he most undoubtedly possessed; but his intrepidity seems to have been wholly unmingled with any higher military qualities; and the enterprise

\* Walsingham, p. 278, 279.

† Willk. Conc. p. 176, 177.

‡ “Mirabiles indulgentias,” &c. Knight. p. 2671.

§ All this is gravely related by Knighton, as a very edifying affair! Knight. 2671.

had precisely that termination which might be expected from the rashness, arrogance, and Failure of the obstinacy of its commander. After crusade spreading carnage and devastation through various parts of Flanders, the crusaders were soon compelled to return, rich in nothing but deeds of waste and bloodshed; and the fiery prelate himself, on revisiting his country, was greeted with the universal outcry of public scorn.\*

This mad adventure, and the means by which the sinews of its warfare were supplied, must have furnished Wiclif with mournful proof that his labours had hitherto, made no deep impression upon the compact and solid mass of the national superstitions. But to him, dejection and despair seem to have been unknown. He was always prepared to work like one who felt that he was toiling for future ages. The crusade against Clement might have persuaded a less resolute spirit that all resistance to the powers of falsehood were vain and hopeless. Wiclif had no ears to hear such treacherous whisperings. His spirit was powerfully moved within him at this fresh eruption of impiety; and his honest indignation was manifested by a renewal of his contest with the Mendicants: for the Mendicants, as Wiclif's "Ob- might be expected, were the busiest <sup>lectors to the</sup> among the tribute-gatherers for the en- <sup>Freres."</sup> terprise in question. Accordingly, it was at this period that he put forth his tract, entitled "Objections to the Freres;" the same treatise which has been already noticed, and in which, under fifty compendious articles, he concentrates and sums up nearly all the censures which he had ever advanced against their practices and opinions. That the tract in question appeared about this time, is rendered certain, by its allusion to the sacramental controversy,—to the Papal schism,—and to the war in Flanders, as an

\* Froissart. Walsingham.



expedition, the only object of which was "to make Christ's Vicar the wealthiest in the world." In another of his works which was also published nearly at the same period, "the Sentence of the Curse Ex-  
~~He condemns~~ <sup>the Crusades.</sup> he makes a direct attack on the infatuation of the Crusaders. He there complains that the Pope brings "the seal and banner of Christ on the cross, that is the token of peace, mercy, and charity, for to slee all Christen men, for love of twaie false priests, that ben open Anti-Christis, for to meyntheyne their worldly state, to oppress Christendom, worse than Jews weren against holy writ, and life of Christ and his apostles." And he asks, indignantly, "Why wole not the proud priest of Rome grant full pardon to all men for to live in peace, and charitie, and patience, as he doth to all men to fight and slee Christen men?"\* The same subject is introduced into his treatise on the seven deadly sins; and it furnishes him with an occasion of propounding certain eccentric and adventurous opinions relative to the practice of war. The title of conquest he conceives to be utterly worthless and untenable, unless the conquest itself be expressly commanded by the Almighty; as in the case of the tribes of Israel when they seized upon the land of Canaan. And, even so, in these latter days, when sin hath wrought the forfeiture of any kingdom, Christ, as the rightful Sovereign of all the earth, may, by his word, deliver that kingdom into the hands of whom he will. But then he affirms, that it is not within human competency to pronounce that any such forfeiture hath actually been incurred, unless the assailants are certified thereof by a revelation from heaven. A very different doctrine, he allowed, was held by the supreme Pontiff, and his adherents, who have frequently given their sanction to religious

Wiclif's opinions respecting the lawfulness of wars.

\* Lewis, c. vii, p. 121.

Wars;\* but it was always to be kept in mind, that St. Peter himself was liable to error; and it might, therefore, fairly be surmised, that the same infirmity had descended to his successors: and he infers, from the whole matter, that all hostilities undertaken without a special injunction from the God of battles, are, under the Christian dispensation, as indefensible, as they were under the Jewish theocracy. Wars of self-defence fare little better, in his judgment, than wars of conquest or aggression. Friends, he tells us, have been withstood by angels, and righteous men have often overcome the wicked: but in neither instance has the cause been committed to the arbitrement of force. Sometimes the law of the land will enable us to resist our adversaries; and, at all times, men of the Gospel, by the spirit of patience and of peace, have been, and ever may be, conquerors through the suffering of death. How the quarrels of nations are to be settled upon these principles, he does not proceed to instruct us. Possibly he might be withheld by the conviction, that it would be to little purpose to enlarge further upon a doctrine, which, as he confesses, he well knew would be received with general scorn. Contemptible as it was, however, he avers that men, who would be martyrs for the law of God, would hold thereby: and he sarcastically adds, that the knight who derives his honours from the slaughter of his fellow-creatures, is frequently outdone by the hangman, who killeth many more, and with a better title.†

Whatever may be the crudity of some of these positions, it is obvious that he who insisted on them, would be prepared to give no quarter to the iniquities of this Papal crusade. He accordingly returns, repeatedly, to the charge against it. A fighting priest,

\* "Such wars," says Fuller, "increased the *intrado* of the Pope's revenues. Some say purgatory fire heateth his kitchen: they may add, the holy war filled his pot, if not paid for all his second course."—*Holy War*, B. v. c. 12.

† *MS. Hom. Bib. Reg.* 18. b. ix. p. 109. cited by Vaughan, vol. II. p. 211.

he describes as no better than a fiend, stained foul with homicide. The friars, indeed, may say that bishops can fight best of all men, and that the work becomes them nobly, since they are lords of the whole world. Thus, they tell us, did Maccabeus fight; and Christ bade his disciples sell their coats, and buy them swords; but whereto, if not to fight? But Christ, he replies, taught not his apostles to fight with swords of iron, but with the sword of God's word, which standeth in meekness of heart, and in prudence of tongue: and the two Popes would do well to give heed to these truths; when they fight with each other, with the most blasphemous leasings, that ever issued out of hell.\*

He conceives his life to be in danger from his enemies. That Wiclif was fully aware of the danger attendant on all this "free-spoken truth," seems clear from various passages of his writings, and, more especially, of his *Dialogus*, which was produced after his banishment from Oxford, and in which it is plainly intimated, that a multitude of the friars, and of others who were called Christians, were then compassing his death by every variety of machination.† That he had fully counted the cost of his warfare, is further evident from the language in which he contends for the necessity of constant preparation for martyrdom. "It is a satanical excuse," he says, in the same treatise, "made by modern hypocrites, that it is not necessary now to suffer martyrdom, as it was in the primitive Church, because now all, or the greatest part of living men, are believers, and there are no tyrants who put Christians to death. This excuse is suggested by the devil: for, if the faithful would now stand firm for the law of Christ, and, as his soldiers, endure bravely any sufferings, they might tell the

\* From the MS. of Dr. James in the Bodleian, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 212, 213.

† *Dialogus*, lib. iv. c. 4. 17. 39. See Lewis, c. vii. p. 125. Turner's *Hist. of Eng.* pt. iv. p. 424.

Pope, the cardinals, the bishops, and other prelates, how, departing from the faith of the Gospel, they minister unfaithfully to God, and what perilous injury they commit against his people." And he adds, "Instead of visiting pagans, to convert them by martyrdom, let us preach constantly the law of Christ to princely prelates: martyrdom will then meet us, speedily enough, if we persevere in faith and patience."\* We have seen, however, that in the midst of all his dangers, there were various causes which combined to divert the malice of his adversaries, and to save them from the "deep damnation of his taking off." The times were full of confusion. England was convulsed by contending factions. The antagonist Pontiffs were still engaged in anathematizing each other, and in tearing Europe to pieces. And then, although the Duke of Lancaster withdrew his open support from the Reformer, when once he committed himself to the sacramental contest, it was very doubtful whether he would endure the sacrifice of his valued and time-honoured friend. Besides, it was evident that the days of Wiclif were drawing to an end: and the result of all these circumstances was, that the man who for more than twenty years had made the kingdom echo with his testimony against the corruptions of the Church, was, nevertheless, doomed to close his immortal labours by a peaceful death.† After his settlement at Lutterworth, his infirmities compelled him to ease the burden of his parochial duties, by the assistance of a curate. To the last, however, he did not wholly discontinue his personal ministrations; and it was his happiness to finish his course in the public execution of his holy office. On the 29th of December, 1384, he was mortally seized with paralysis, in his church, during the celebration

\* *Dialogus*, cited by Turner, pt. iv. p. 424.

† "Admirable," says Fuller, "that a hare so often hunted, with so many packs of dogs, should die, at last, quietly sitting in his form."—*Church Hist.* p. 188.

of mass, and just about the time of the elevation of the sacrament. The attack was so severe as to deprive him of speech, and to render him utterly helpless. In this condition he lingered two days; and was finally taken to his rest, on the last day of the year, and in the sixty-first year of his age.

1384.  
Death of Wiclif.

**Character of Wiclif.** Thus prematurely was terminated the career of this extraordinary man. His days were not extended to the length usually allotted to our species. Ten more years of vigorous exertion might reasonably have been expected from the virtuous and temperate habits of an exemplary life.— But the earthly tenement was, probably, worn out by the intense and fervid energy of the spirit within: and if his mortal existence be measured by the amount of his labours and achievements, he must appear to us as full of days as he was of honours. It now remains that we endeavour to form a righteous estimate of him, as he presents himself to our conceptions through the haze and mist of ages. Unfortunately, he is known to us almost entirely by his writings. Over all those minute and personal peculiarities which give to any individual his distinct expression and physiognomy, time has drawn an impenetrable veil. To us he appears, for the most part, as a sort of unembodied agency. To delineate his *character*, in the fullest and most interesting sense of that word, would be to write romance, and not biography. During a portion of his life, indeed, he is more or less mixed up with public interests and transactions: but of these matters our notices are but poor and scanty; and, if they were more copious, they would, probably, do little towards supplying us with those nameless particulars to which biography owes its most powerful charm. With regard to the details of his daily life,—the habitual complexion of his temper—the turn of his conversation—the manner of his deportment among his companions—his inclinations or antipa-

thies—his friendships or his alienations—we must be content to remain in hopeless ignorance. The only circumstance recorded concerning him, that falls within the description of an *anecdote*, is the reply with which he confounded the meddling and insidious Friars, who intruded themselves upon him when they thought he was about to breathe his last. This incident is, indeed, most abundantly characteristic; and it makes us bitterly regret that it stands alone. A few more such particulars would have been quite invaluable. As it is, we must be satisfied to think of him as a voice crying in the wilderness, and lifting up, through a long course of years, a loud, incessant, heart-stirring testimony, against abuses, which for ages had wearied the long-suffering of heaven. Respecting his gigantic successor, Martin Luther, we are in possession of all that can enable us to form the most distinct conception of the man. We see him in connexion with the wise, and the mighty, and “the excellent of the earth.” We behold him in his intercourse with sages and divines, with princes and with potentates. We can trace him, too, through all those bitter agonies of spirit through which he struggled on, and on, till at last he seized upon the truth which made him free for ever. But, to us, Wiclif appears almost as a solitary being. He stands before us in a sort of grand and mysterious loneliness. To group him, if we so may speak, with other living men, would require a very strong effort of the imagination. And hence it is that we meditate on his story with emotions of solemn admiration, but without any turbulent agitation of our sympathies.

In this penury of information, tradi-  
 tion steps in, as it were, to “help us with  
 a little help.” Various stories, it would  
 appear, are current to this day in the town of Lutter-  
 worth, respecting its ancient and renowned rector.  
 But the only one among them that appears worthy of  
 attention, is that which represents him as admirable

Traditions re-  
 specting Wiclif  
 at Lutterworth.

in all the functions of a parochial minister. A portion of each morning, it is said, was regularly devoted to the relief of the necessitous, to the consolation of the afflicted, and to the discharge of every pious office, by the bed of sickness and of death. Every thing which is actually known respecting Wiclif combines to render this account entirely credible. The duties of the Christian ministry form the incessant burden of a considerable portion of his writings. To the faithfulness and assiduity with which he discharged one very essential portion of those duties, the extant manuscripts of his parochial discourses bear ample and honourable testimony. There is nothing, therefore, which can tempt the most sceptical caution to question the report which describes him as exemplary in every department of his sacred stewardship. "Good priests," he himself tells us, "who live well, in purity of thought, and speech, and deed, and in good example to the people, who teach the law of God, up to their knowledge, and labour fast, day and night, to learn it better, and teach it openly and constantly, these are very prophets of God, and holy angels of God, and the spiritual lights of the world! Thus saith God, by his prophets, and Jesus Christ in his Gospel; and saints declare it well by authority and reason. Think, then, ye priests, on this noble office, and honour it, and do it cheerfully according to your knowledge and your power!"\* It is surely delightful to believe that the people of Lutterworth had before their eyes the living and breathing form of that holy benevolence which is here portrayed with so much admirable simplicity and beauty.

His preferences not inconsistent with his notions respecting clerical possessions. The preceding narrative has already made us acquainted with the notions entertained by Wiclif relative to the endowments of the Church, and the revenues of individual clergymen. And it

\* MS. For the order of priesthood, cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 269.

may, perhaps, be thought somewhat remarkable that any one who maintained such principles should nevertheless have held, without apparent scruple, the chair of theology at Oxford, a prebendal stall, and a parochial rectory. Of the value of these preferments we are in no condition to form any satisfactory estimate. They must, however, in all probability, have been considerable; at any rate, they must have been far beyond the measure of what was needful to supply the moderate necessities of life, at a period when the sacred office doomed its professors to celibacy; and, therefore, far beyond that which his system would seem to allot, as the legitimate provision of a Christian minister. The truth is, that Wiclif seems to have regarded all the endowments of the Church as a manifest departure from the original spirit of the Christian system. Had he been allowed to remodel our ecclesiastical polity, he would, probably, have made the clergy dependent on the voluntary offerings of the people. However, he found a different scheme actually established; and he, doubtless, conceived himself at liberty to conform to it, provided the funds entrusted to his stewardship were administered by him according to the intention of the original donor. This intention he understood to be, that the holder of those funds should retain for his own use so much as might be required for his own support, upon a frugal and moderate scale; but that, for every thing beyond his own personal wants, he should stand in the place of perpetual almoner to the founder, and perpetual trustee for the poor. Now there appears no reasonable cause to question that Wiclif acted faithfully up to this principle. His adversaries have never breathed a syllable to the disparagement of his integrity in this particular. He has never, that I am aware, been charged, by those who most cordially hated him, with inconsistency, for accepting or retaining his preferments, or with avarice and selfishness in the disposal of his emolu-



ments. And when we combine this consideration with the traditional accounts of him, which still survive at Lutterworth, the almost irresistible inference is, that he did, actually, regard all his superfluities as strictly consecrated to the relief of indigence.

With regard to the private life, and personal habits of Wiclif, it has never been denied by his adversaries, that in these respects he was altogether above impeachment or suspicion. But it requires no inconsiderable exercise of patience to observe the spirit which seems to have presided over the representations given of him by some, whom we might naturally expect to find among his friends. By these he is pictured to us rather under the aspect of an unquiet political agitator than of a devout and spiritual servant of Christ.\* The foundation for this charge it is beyond my capacity to discover. It is true that his great reputation fixed the eyes of the government upon him as the fittest person to vindicate his country from the ignominy and the oppression of the Papal tribute—that the same cause dispatched him, among other illustrious men, as the representative of her ecclesiastical interests in the embassy to Bruges—and, lastly, that the Parliament of England resorted to the sanction of his judgment, when they resolved, that the very marrow of the realm should no longer be drained out, to pamper the greediness and ambition of a foreign court. Services like these would seem to demand of Englishmen no other sentiments than those of gratitude and reverence: and that eye must, indeed, be keen to “pry into abuses,” which can discover in the performance of such services any grievous departure from the sacredness of the spiritual function. An English ecclesiastic, of distinguished sagacity and erudition, was employed to defend the Church and State of England against the rapacity

\* *Münzer's Church History.*

of alienation; and this, too, in an age when the talents and accomplishments of Churchmen were constantly in requisition, for all the most arduous responsibilities of secular office. This is the whole truth and substance of the case. If, indeed, it could be shown that the days and nights of Wickliff had been wholly, or chiefly, consumed in occupations and engagements of this description,—and that his powers were thus diverted from the peculiar channel in which the main current of a Churchman's exertions ought, indisputably, to flow,—there might be some pretence for this invidious exhibition of his character. But the fact is not so. The occurrences in question were nothing more than short episodes in his life. We have only to look into his writings, or, even into a catalogue of his writings, to see how small a portion of his time on earth was absorbed by matters in which politics had the slightest concern. And the more rigorously those writings are scrutinized, the more clearly will it appear, that no confessor was ever animated by a more disinterested, unworldly, and devotional spirit, than the man who enjoyed the friendship of John of Gaunt, and the confidence of the British Parliament.\*

The imperfect justice hitherto rendered to the memory of Wickliff, as a man of deep religious affections, may, in part, be the natural effect of that peculiar interest which attaches to his character as the antagonist of a corrupt hierarchy. We have been accustomed to regard him, chiefly, as the scourge of imposture, the ponderous hammer, that smote upon the brazen idolatry of his age; and our thoughts have thus been too much withdrawn from the work, which was constantly going forward within the re-

\* The limits of this work forbid the introduction of passages from the works of Wickliff, in support of this assertion. They, however, who may be desirous of satisfying themselves upon this point, have only to peruse the more diffuse volumes of Mr. Vaughan, whose laborious examination of the whole of Wickliff's writings, both printed, and in MS., has enabled him, in this particular, irresistibly to vindicate his memory.

cesses of his own spirit. A more just and patient consideration of his writings will show us, that the demolition of error, and of fraud, was not more constantly present to his mind, than the building up of holy principles and affections. These two objects are, for the most part, closely interwoven with each other: and this it is, together with his use of the vernacular tongue, which gave his writings their wide and powerful influence. There had, doubtless, (as we have already observed,) been produced before his time, and within the very bosom of the Romish Church, considerable stores of solid and devotional theology; but, then, they were either enshrined in such "cunning work" of scholastic subtilty and abstraction,—or they were so guiltless of all reference to existing circumstances and abuses,—that, to the people, they were, generally, no better than the merest nullities; and they were, consequently, regarded with supreme indifference and composure, by the Romish Church. The reveries of Plato were scarcely more innocuous to the worldly system of the Papacy, than pure effusions of the most exulted piety; such, for instance, as the works of Bradwardine, or, at a later period, the treatise of Thomas à Kempis. But the toils of Wiclif had a twofold object. He laboured not only to shake in pieces the outward fabric of the house of Rimmon, but, also, to expose and to correct the personal vices and corruptions which had for ages sought a shelter in its sanctuary. The former of these is an undertaking, which rouses the indignant sympathies of mankind. The latter is a work which summons all who contemplate it, to a painful examination of their own hearts and consciences. And hence it is, that the cause which exposed him to persecution in his own day, is that which has principally made him the object of admiration in the times which followed. The Reformer of Christian morals has been forgotten in the Reformer of Papal abuse; and thus his memory has

been left open to the suggestion, that he is to be honoured as the antagonist of Popery, not as the advocate of Christ,—fitted to join with politicians and with princes, in their resistance to encroachment, rather than to band with saints and confessors in bearing testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus.

If any one were required to point out ~~the~~ <sup>his</sup> unwearied the distinguishing attribute of Wicklif's energy. mind, he might, with justice, fix upon its inexhaustible and unwearying energy. He was not one of those small combatants, who soon speed their puny shafts, and, when their quiver is once emptied, sit down contented, and, think their *warfare is accomplished*. He was, it may be truly said, a most "insatiate archer." For a long series of years his bolts followed each other so thick and fast, that his enemies, who affirmed that he was an emissary of Satan, might have been almost justified in pronouncing that his name was *Legion*. One would imagine, that his spirit never enjoyed a moment's ease or comfort, but while it was giving impulse to his pen; for it has been conjectured that, if all his works could be brought together, they would form a collection nearly equal in bulk to the writings of St. Augustine. His attainments, for the age in which he lived, were eminent and admirable. He was acknowledged as a mighty clerk, even by Archbishop Arundel;\* and we have already seen that his skill in the scholastic discipline was allowed to be incomparable. This last accomplishment, it has frequently been observed, was of signal service to the cause to which he dedicated himself. It is justly remarked, by Mr. Turner, in speaking of his *Triologus*, that "its attractive merit was, that it combined the new opinions with the scholastic style of thinking and deduction. It was not the mere illiterate Reformer, teaching novelties, whom the man of

Probable effect  
of the scholastic  
discipline on  
his mind.

\* Thorp's Examination.

education disdained and derided : it was the respected academician, reasoning with the ideas of the Reformer.\* If estimated, however, by its effect upon his own mind, rather than by its influence upon the minds of others, the Genius of the Schools was but a very questionable ally. It was frequently a source of weakness rather than of strength. It seems, whenever he called it to his aid, to have exercised a sinister and treacherous influence upon all his faculties, and often to have forced them grievously aside from their simplicity and rectitude. When he is addressing untutored minds, he usually drives his ploughshare right onward ; but no sooner does he yoke this capricious drudge with his own sturdy oxen, than all manner of unsteadiness and obliquity seems to be the consequence. This we have seen remarkably exemplified in his two confessions, relative to the Eucharist. The English one is, on the whole, simple and perspicuous enough : the other, which is in Latin, and composed with a view to more accomplished judges, runs out into all the mazes and intricacies of the favourite mode of reasoning ; and the result is, that it has given his adversaries occasion to charge him with cowardly and disingenuous artifice, and to affirm, that his object was to envelope himself in darkness, and so to effect his escape. The injustice of this charge, however, has been already shown. Timidity can have had no concern with the obscurity and perplexity of this document—for timidity never would have dictated the sentence with which it concludes, and which very intelligibly stigmatizes his persecutors and assailants as little better than agents of the Devil. The scholastic discipline may, perhaps, have occasionally bewildered his intellect ; but it would be very difficult to show that it ever spread a mist over his moral perceptions.

\* Turner, *Hist. England*, pt. iv. p. 420.

It is, perhaps, scarcely worth while to recur to the imputation of unmannerly coarseness, which the adversaries of Wiclif have laboured to fix upon the style in which he arraigned the existing iniquities of the Romish system. One word more upon the subject may, however, be endured. Refinement, it must surely be well known, was not among the characteristics of the fourteenth century. The language of Wiclif's Romish adversaries would alone be sufficient to show this; for he can bear no comparison with them in the command of these implements of controversial warfare. Even if we advance from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, we shall, unhappily, perceive, that urbanity and mildness had found but little favour among men who were engaged in theological or literary conflict. Wiclif might, really, have gone to school to Martin Luther and John Calvin, had he lived in their days, and had he been desirous to perfect himself in the accomplishment of railing. It is humiliating, indeed, to think, that this species of fire-brand should ever be madly tossed about by men, who appeared as ministers and champions of a religion, which speaks incessantly of benevolence and of courtesy. But, in estimating the blame of such excesses, it is weak and ignorant to disregard the complexion of the age, which will usually be exhibited in greater vividness, in proportion to the vehement sincerity of its masterful and over-ruling spirits.

The name of Wiclif irresistibly carries us forward to that of Luther, and invites us to a moment's comparison of these mighty spirits with each other. In one respect the resemblance between their destinies is eminently striking: it was the glory of each to give the holy Scriptures to his countrymen, in their native tongue. In vehemence of temperament, in audacity of genius, and heroism of soul, the German may, indeed, be thought to stand above our countryman; and, in truth,

Comparison of Wiclif with Luther.

it would, perhaps, be difficult to fix on many, among the sons of men, fit to endure, in these particulars, a comparison with the Saxon monk. It is impossible to think of him,—setting at nought the thunders of the earthly divinity, and tossing into the flames his Bull of excommunication,—without being reminded of the warrior of antiquity, proclaiming that if the bolt of Jove himself were to fall at his feet, it should not, for a moment, arrest his course.\* On the other hand, however, it should be remembered, that Luther breathed an air which had long been most potently impregnated with the very essence of innovation. For several ages, an accusing spirit had been wandering throughout the continent, and loudly arraigning the abuses of the Papacy. In many parts of Europe, it had found a congenial element,—sometimes even within the precincts of the Imperial Palace of Germany. But, till the days of Wiclif, “the noise of its wings” had been but faintly heard in England. Its influences may, doubtless, have been considerably aided by the intercourse between this country and its continental dependencies. But it was never powerful enough to seize on any strong positions in our land. The resistance offered to Popery by our monarchs, our barons, and our parliaments, was the resistance of politicians, indignant at the impoverishment and disgrace of their country, rather than of Christian men, afflicted for the perversion and abuse of their religious institutions. Among our bravest and loftiest minds, indeed, that of Grostete seems to have been most deeply smitten with an earnest longing for better and purer times. But even his aspirations stirred him not to an open and systematic conflict with corruption, in the face of the whole realm. This was an enterprise reserved for our Reformer: and the circumstances under which he seized upon the adventure, were, in some respects, perhaps, more full of terror than those which ever frowned upon the


\* Sept. contrâ Thebas.

antagonist of Tetzcl. In the early days of Luther, the Papacy appears to have settled quietly down upon its lees. The outcry for improvement was occasionally loud and vehement, indeed: but the clamour had been so often raised in vain, that it was listened to, at length, with most insolent composure; so that the lethargy of the Vatican was broken only by the uproar of the assault upon it. And then, too, when once the conflict began, the leader of it could number potentates among his allies and partisans; till, at last, he may be said to have had

A kingdom for a stage, princes for actors,  
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene.

Not so in the age of Wiclif. The Papacy then, at least, was vigilant and active, and nearly in the full integrity of its strength. At all events, the secret of its weakness had not then been partially exposed by the Councils of Pisa, of Constance, and of Basil; and therefore it was, that a voice from England, demanding reformation,—denouncing the religious Orders as the legions of the fiend—and calling on the Holy Father himself to cast away his “crown of pride,” and his unhallowed wealth—(and all this too in a tongue understood, not only by the Scribe, and the Recorder, and the Priest, but *by the people sitting on the wall*)—a voice like this, from the chiefest and and most fruitful paradise of the Papacy, must have sounded like the trumpet-note of insane rebellion and apostasy; and must have awakened the direst wrath in the heart of the Papal autocrat. It must also be considered, that although the Englishman was, to a certain extent, countenanced by the mother of the King, and by the most powerful Prince of the blood, he met with no support which deserved to be compared with that retinue of powerful patronage which gave effect to the exertions of Luther; and, that, towards the close of his life, even that protection dropped away from him, and left him open to an-




 ticipations of martyrdom. And yet, in spite of these discouragements, he continued urgent and faithful to the very last; differing from his former self, at the close of his days, in nothing but the larger extent of his views, the deeper intensity of his convictions, and the more exalted daring of his purposes. Allowing, therefore, to Luther, the highest niche in this sacred department of the Temple of Renown, I know not who can be chosen to fill the next, if it shall be denied to Wiclif.

Prevalence of  
Wiclif's opin-  
ions, at Oxford,  
after his death.

There seems to be no doubt that, after the death of Wiclif, his opinions continued to prevail in the University of Oxford, to an extent which excited the indignation of the Ecclesiastical authorities, and that his memory was cherished there with feelings of the profoundest veneration. The prevalence of his doctrines is abundantly attested by the reiterated complaints of Archbishop Arundel, who affirms that Oxford was as a vine that brought forth wild and sour grapes, which being eaten by the fathers, the teeth of the children were set on edge; so that the whole province of Canterbury was tainted with novel and damnable Lollardism, to the intolerable and notorious scandal of the University.\* Again:—"She who was formerly the mother of virtues, the prop of the Catholic faith, the singular pattern of obedience, now brings forth only abortive or degenerate children, who encourage contumacy and rebellion, and sow tares

The testimonial  
of the Univer-  
sity, in honour  
of his memory,  
in 1406.

among the pure wheat."† Their reverence for the name and labours of Wiclif is indicated by a solemn testimonial to his worth, which is said to have been given by the University, in the year 1406, and sealed with their common seal. It is true

Question of its  
authenticity  
considered.

that considerable suspicion hangs over the authenticity of this document. The precise occasion on which it was drawn

\* Wicl. Conc. vol. iii. p. 318.

† Lewis, c. x. p. 235.

up and executed, is unknown; and, besides, it has been gravely affirmed, "that one Peter Payne, a heretic, stole the University seal, under which he wrote to the heretics at Prague, in Bohemia, that Oxford, and all England were of the same belief with those of Prague, except the false Friars Mendicant." There is something in this story not very probable: for, as Lewis observes, it is not lightly to be credited that the seal of the University should be so carelessly guarded, as to render practicable this impudent imposture. A somewhat more plausible supposition is, that the friends and admirers of Wiclif may have seized upon the advantage afforded them, by the absence of his enemies, during the vacation, and may have assembled for the purpose of honouring the memory of the Reformer by the above Certificate. And this conjecture receives some slight support from a statute afterwards made, providing, that the seal of the University shall not be fixed to any writing, but in full congregation of Regents, if in full term; or in full convocation of Regents and non-Regents, if in vacation; and that nothing shall be sealed till after one day's full deliberation. Nothing can be more likely than that this statute may have been framed to obviate practices similar to those by which this testimonial is supposed to have been obtained: but, yet, when it is recollected that this enactment did not take place till 1426, twenty years after the passing of the document in question, it will not appear eminently probable that this was the fraud by which the statute was occasioned. It should further be remembered that, although, according to some accounts, this testimonial was stigmatized as a forgery by certain Englishmen at the Council of Constance, yet there was no act produced, on the part of the University, disclaiming its authenticity.\* But whether the paper be authentic or not, it may still be

\* See Lewis, c. x. p. 228—236, where the authenticity of this testimonial is amply discussed.

relied on as evidence of the estimation in which the character of Wiclif was still held at Oxford; for the preparation of such an instrument would never have entered the head of the most unscrupulous of his admirers, if it were not perfectly notorious that his memory was deeply honoured by a very large portion of the members of the University: and for this reason the testimonial is here inserted at length.\*

*"The publike Testimonie given out by the Universitie of Oxford, touching the Commendation of the great Learning and good Life of John Wickliffe.*

"Unto all and singuler the children of our holy mother the church, to whom this present letter shall come: the vicechancellor of the Universitie of Oxford, with the whole congregation of the masters, wish perpetual health in the Lord. Forsomuch as it is not commonly seene, that the acts and monuments of valiant men, nor the praise and merits of good men should be passed over and hidden with perpetuall silence, but that true report and fame should continually spread abrode the same in strange and farre distant places, both for the witnesse of the same, and example of others: Forasmuch also as the provident discretion of mans nature being recompensed with cruelty, hath devised and ordained this buckler and defence, against such as doe blaspheme and slander other mens doings, that whensoever witnesse by word of mouth cannot be present, the pen by writing may supply the same:

"Hereupon it followeth, that the special good will and care which we bare unto John Wickliffe, sometime child of this our Universitie, and professour of divinitie, moving and stirring our minds (as his manners and conditions required no lesse) with one mind, voice, and testimonie, wee doe witnesse all his con-


\* The original Latin is printed in WILK. CONC. vol. iii. p. 302, from the Cotton MS. Faust. c. 7.

ditions and doings throughout his whole life, to have been most sincere and commendable: whose honest manners and conditions, profoundnesse of learning, and most redolent renoune and fame, wee desire the more earnestly to bee notified and knowne unto all faithfull, for that we understand the maturitie and ripenesse of his conversation, his diligent labours and travels to tend to the praise of God, the helpe and safeguard of others, and the profit of the church.

"Wherefore we signifie unto you by these presents, that his conversation (even from his youth upwards, unto the time of his death) was so praise worthie and honest, that never at any time was there any note or spot of suspicion noysed of him. But in his answering, reading, preaching and determining, he behaved himselfe laudably, and as a stout and valiant champion of the faith; vanquishing by the force of the Scriptures, all such who by their wilful beggery blasphemed and slandered Christ's religion. Neither was this said doctor convict of any heresie, either burned of our prelates after his buriall. God forbid that our prelates should have condemned a man of such honestie, for an heretike: who amongst all the Universitie, had written in logicke, philosophie, divinitie, moralitie, and the speculative art without peere. The knowledge of which all and singuler things, wee doe desire to testifie and deliver forth; to the intent, that the fame and renoune of this said doctor, may be the more evident and had in reputation, amongst them, unto whose hands these present letters testimoniall shall come.

"In witness whereof, we have caused these our letters testimoniall to bee sealed with our common seale. Dated at Oxford in our congregation house, the 5. day of October, in the yeare of our Lord 1406."

Next to the admiration of those who are friendly to his cause and memory, the most forcible encomium of Wiclif is to be found in the virulent abuse heaped upon his name by his adversaries. Among the vari-


 ous extant testimonials of this description, we may select that of the Chronicler, Walsingham. We have seen, above, the titles which Wiclif earned from the pen of that writer, by the faithful and zealous labours of his life. The following is the language in which the same historian exults over his death :—" On the day of St. Thomas the Martyr, Archbishop of Canterbury, that organ of the Devil, that enemy of the Church, that confusion of the populace, that idol of heretics, that mirror of hypocrites, that instigator of schism, that sower of hatred, that fabricator of lies, John Wiclif,—when, on the same day, *as it is reported*, he would have vomited forth the blasphemies, which he had prepared in his sermon against St. Thomas,—being suddenly struck by the judgment of God, felt all his limbs invaded by the palsy. That mouth, which had spoken monstrous things against God and his Saints, or the holy Church, was then miserably distorted, exhibiting a frightful spectacle to the beholders. His tongue, now speechless, denied him even the power of confessing. His head shook, and thus plainly showed that the curse which God had thundered forth against Cain, was now fallen upon him. And, that none might doubt of his being consigned to the company of Cain, he showed by manifest outward signs, that he died in despair."\* Again : " After he had been smitten with the palsy, he dragged out his hated life until St. Silvester's day. On which day he breathed out his malicious spirit to the abodes of darkness. And, in truth, most justly was he stricken on the day of St. Thomas, whom his envenomed tongue had often blasphemed ; and was doomed, with temporal death, on the day of St. Silvester, whom he had exasperated with his incessant invectives."\* It would be idle to waste a word of

\* Walsingh. p. 338.

† Wals. Ypod. Neustr. p. 142. It was vain to hope that the memory of an audacious heretic would find mercy at the hand of Romish writers,

censure upon this stupid and barbarous jargon. It is utterly undeserving of notice, otherwise than as affording a curious indication of the spirit of the age, and a strong testimony to the formidable nature of Wiclif's aggressions on its predominant superstitions.

The hatred of Wiclif's enemies was quite as long-lived and as active as the admiration of his adherents. It not only persecuted his memory, but forbade his remains to rest in peace. This pitiful exhibition of malignity was occasioned by the wide dispersion of the English Reformer's opinions in many parts of the continent, but more especially in Bohemia. The queen of Richard the Second was a Bohemian princess; and, on her decease her attendants are supposed to

Prevalence of  
Wiclif's opin-  
ions in Bohe-  
mia.

when one of their own Prelates is stigmatized by them as a victim of God's just vengeance, for having dared to intimate his dislike of one of the grossest of their superstitious follies. The massacre of Archbishop Sudbury, by the insurgent peasantry, was regarded as no less than a manifest judgment of heaven; as may be seen from the following narrative, by the author of "*the looking-glass for little children*:" "In the fourth jubilee of the most famous martyr, St. Thomas, the people from every place flocked to Canterbury, with intense affection of heart. At the same time, it happened that the venerable father, the Lord Simon de Suthbert, then Bishop of London, was travelling towards Canterbury; and being misled by the spirit of error, assured the multitudes, then on their pilgrimage thither, that the plenary indulgence they hoped for at Canterbury was of no profit or value: on which many of the crowd, with downcast looks, stood amazed at this saying of so great a father. Some of them actually went back again: but others, with loud voices, cursed the bishop to his face, saying and wishing, that he might die a base and shameful death, who was not afraid thus to injure and insult the glorious martyr. A Kentish knight, also, (whose name the writer thinks was Sir Thomas de Aldoun,) being moved with anger, came up to the bishop, and said: 'My Lord Bishop, because you have raised this sedition among the people, against Saint Thomas, on pain of my life, or on peril of my soul, you shall die a shameful death;' to which all the people cried, *amen, amen!* And accordingly, in the reign of Richard II. this Simon de Suthbert, then archbishop of Canterbury, was beheaded by the mob that rose under Wat Tyler and Jack Straw, that the voice of the people (that is, saith the writer of this story, the voice of God,) might, even as it was foretold, be in due time fulfilled." And this narrative, the writer tells us, is given, in order that others might be deterred from all opposition to the Papal indulgences, and from all attempts to repress the devotion of the pilgrims.

\* *Speculum parvulorum*, lib. v. c. 27. apud Wharton, *Angl. Sacra*. vol. II. cited by Lewis in his *Life of Bishop Pecock*, c. III. p. 44, 47.

have carried back with them to their own country some considerable portions of Wiclif's compositions, and thus to have been greatly instrumental in the dissemination of his doctrines. The soil was, at that time, well prepared for the reception of the seed; and the effect of his writings there was even more striking and rapid than that which they produced in his own country. It is said that full two hundred of his books were burnt by Subineo Lepus, bishop of Prague. The number may, at first sight, appear surprising: but it must be recollected, that Wiclif generally sent forth his notions into the world in small detachments. He, doubtless, perceived, that the frequent appearance of little tracts would much facilitate the dissemination of his tenets,—an object which, before the invention of printing, would be most injuriously retarded by the publication of more bulky volumes. The estimation in which these treatises were held in Bohemia, is illustrated by the fact, that many of those which were burnt by Subineo were very finely written, and decorated with splendid bindings, and costly embossments of gold. It is still more conspicuously manifested, in the open commendation with which they were honoured by the illustrious martyrs, John Huss and Jerome of Prague;

His writings condemned, and his remains disinterred, by a Decree of the Council of Constance.

and in the consequent reprobation of them by the Council of Constance. In 1415, full thirty years after the death of Wiclif, a long list of intolerable propositions was selected by that assembly from his writings, and branded with the mark of heresy. The memory of the writer was, at the same time, consigned, in due form, to infamy and execration; and an order was issued, that "his body and bones, if they might be discerned and known from the bodies of other faithful people,\* should be

\* This must have been a matter of some difficulty: "for though," says Fuller, "the earth in the chancel of Lutterworth, where he was interred, hath not so quick a digestion as the earth of Aeldama, to consume flesh

taken from the ground, and thrown far away from the burial of any church, according to the canon laws and decrees." "And here," exclaims old Fox, "what Heraclitus would not laugh, or what Democritus would not weep, to see so sage and reverend Catoes, to occupie their heads to take up a poor man's bodie, so long dead and buried? And yet, peradventure, they were not able to find his right bones, but tooke up some other bodie, and so of a catholic made a heretic." But, whether the bones discovered were catholic or heretic; the grave was actually ransacked, in pursuance of this decree, though not till thirteen years after it was pronounced: and melancholy it is to think, that the person to whom the order was dispatched, was Richard Fleming, once a zealous adherent of the Reformer, but then bishop of Lincoln, and an unsparing persecutor of the opinions which he formerly professed! The remains of Wiclif were accordingly disinterred and burned, and the ashes cast into the adjoining brook, called the Swift. "And so," exclaims the martyrologist, "was he resolved into three elements, earth, fire, and water; they thinking thereby utterly to extinct and abolish both the name and doctrine of Wiclif for ever. Not much unlike the example of the old Pharisees and Sepulchre-knights, which, when they brought the Lord unto the grave, thought to make him sure never to rise again. But these, and all other, must know, that, as there is no counsel against the Lord, so there is no keeping down of veritie, but it will spring and come out of dust and ashes; as appeared right well in this man. For though they digged up his body, burned his bones, and drowned his ashes, yet the word of God, and truth of his doctrine, with the truth and success thereof, they could not burn; which, yet, to

in twenty-four hours, yet such the appetite thereof, and all other English graves, as to leave small reversiones of a body, after so many years."—*Church-History*, p. 170.



this day, for the most part of his articles, do remain."\*  
"The brook," says Fuller, "did convey his ashes into Avon; Avon into Severn; Severn into the narrow seas; they into the main ocean. And thus the ashes of Wiclif are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."†

\* Fox, in Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 96, 97.

† Church History, p. 171, where Fuller notices a vulgar tradition, that the brook, into which the ashes of Wiclif were poured, never since overflowed its banks! Both Papists and Protestants, it seems, have claimed the benefit of this circumstance. In the estimation of the Papists, the regulated flow of the stream is a blessing, by which heaven has clearly expressed its approval of the indignity offered to the remains of a heretic. The Protestants (if any thing, with a better show of reason,) have contended, that the peaceful state of the waters indicates the sanctity of the dust which was once committed to them.

## CHAPTER IX.

## WICLIF'S OPINIONS.

*Wiclif's views of Justification by Faith—Wiclif charged by some with Pelagianism, by others, more justly, with the doctrine of Predestination—His Predestinarian notions chiefly confined to his Scholastic Writings—Pilgrimage and Image-worship—Purgatory—Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences—Excommunication and Papal Interdicts—Papal power and supremacy—Episcopacy—The Church—Church visible and invisible—The Sacraments—Baptism—Confirmation—Penance—Ordination—Matrimony—The Eucharist—Extreme Unction—Celibacy of the Clergy—Fasting—Ceremonies—Church Music—Judicial Astrology—Notions imputed to Wiclif that God must obey the Devil, and that every creature is God—Dominion founded on Grace, how understood and explained by Wiclif—Scriptural principles of civil obedience faithfully enforced by him—Wiclif's opinions as to the power of the State over Church property—Wiclif considers Church Endowments as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity—Tithes represented by him as Alms—Value of Wiclif's services, as preparatory to the Reformation—Notion of the Reformation, as it would probably have been effected by him—The belief prevalent in his time that Satan was loosed—Its probable influence on his views and opinions.*

ALTHOUGH the general tenor and complexion of Wiclif's theological opinions may be collected, with tolerable clearness, from the foregoing narrative of his life, our account of him might reasonably be deemed imperfect, if not followed up by something of a more systematic exhibition of his principles. The attempt, however, to supply the reader with a comprehensive view of his notions, will by no means involve the necessity of dwelling diffusely upon those points, respecting which his *protestantism* (if the term may be allowed,) has never been subject to question. Our attention will, therefore, be chiefly directed to those topics which have furnished occasion of doubt and misgivings to his admirers, or, of slander and perversion to his enemies.

Wiclif's views of Justification by Faith. Of course the defender of his memory can have no peace until he has disposed of the censure with which his theology has been stigmatized by Melanchthon, and, after him, by some other Protestant Divines; namely, that it was not only tinctured with Pelagianism, and often ascribes desert to human actions,—but that it contains no recognition whatever of the grand doctrine of *justification by faith*. In the mouth of a reformer of the sixteenth century, this objection ought, perhaps, to excite but little surprise. The doctrine in question may be said to have been the key which opened the gates of Paradise to Luther; for until he had discovered it, the kingdom of God appeared to him, surrounded as it were by a wall of adamant: and it might naturally be expected that they, who drank deeply into the spirit of Luther's theology, should look with distrust on any one who should dare to approach the sacred enclosure without bearing this mighty instrument aloft in his hand. To them the pilgrim would appear as an unblest adventurer, bent upon scaling the battlements of heaven, instead of entering in at the appointed gate. It was not enough for them, that the spirit of this great truth should essentially pervade the writings of a teacher: his words would, in their eyes, have but little faithfulness in them, unless they prominently and constantly set forth this precious secret, as the beginning, the middle, and the end, of all saving doctrine. Estimated by a standard like this, the divinity of Wiclif may, possibly, appear to come short of the glory of God, and his gratuitous salvation. In our times, this doctrine, of course, has not lost—as it never can lose—a tittle of its value; but it can scarcely be reasonable for us to brood over it with the same jealousy, as if it were a long-buried treasure, but recently dug up by us from the rubbish of ages. At this day, it will hardly be questioned, that, even without an incessant iteration of this truth, the essence of it may be so

mixed up with our teaching, as to give it all the peculiar unction and savour of the Gospel. And if so, we shall find but little difficulty in perceiving that the doctrine of justification by faith was in truth the vital principle of Wiclif's theology. He tells us, in express words, that the merit of Christ is sufficient to redeem mankind from hell, and this without the concurrence of any other cause; that faith in him is sufficient for salvation; that they who truly follow him are justified by his justice, and made righteous by participation in his righteousness; and that infidels are not to be accounted as living virtuously, even though they should do such works as, in their kind, are good.\* Conformable to these declarations is the whole tenor of his doctrine. The merits of his Saviour evidently form the central object of his meditations. And if there occasionally drop from him any allusion to human desert, it is obviously introduced, not in disparagement of the sovereign merits of Christ, but of the vicarious good offices either of priests or saints; not to weaken our dependence on our Redeemer, but to strengthen our conviction that, in the presence of his Judge, each man must stand or fall by his own *personal* doings, not by those of his confessor, or of his mass-priest, or of any other spiritual agent. That he rejected all Pharisaic and Pelagian confidence in human merit, is clear and undeniable. "Heal us, Lord," he exclaims, "for nought; nor for our merits, but for thy mercy.—Lord, not to our merits, but to thy mercy give the joy.—Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness.—Our flesh, though it seem holy, yet it is not holy.—We are all originally sinners, not only from our mother's womb, but in our mother's womb.—We cannot so much as think a good thought, unless Jesu, the Angel of great counsel, send it; nor perform a good work, unless it be properly his good work.—His mercy comes before us, that we

\* James's Apology for Wiclif, c. v.

receive grace, and followeth us, helping and keeping us in grace."\*

And yet, with passages like these scattered over his works, Wiclif has been deemed a worthy associate of Pelagius, and has been charged with suppressing or denying the grace of God, and of teaching his followers to put their sole trust in human virtue and deserving!†

Wiclif charged by some with Pelagianism.

As an antagonist charge to that of Pelagianism, we find him accused by others of maintaining that all things come to pass by absolute necessity; a doctrine which, in its fullest latitude, annihilates not only human merit, but human responsibility. That a Schoolman should resist the temptation to meddle with this untractable question, was scarcely to be expected. That, like all other mortals who have ever approached it, he should be defeated and baffled, was a necessary result of the attempt. I cannot find, however, that he has advanced any thing upon this subject which should fix upon him the imputation of unqualified fatalism. He confesses, indeed, in his *Dialogus*, that he had ascribed every event to absolute necessity; not being able to conceive that there should be any effective impediment to the Divine Will; but then he, likewise, professes to modify this proposition by the needful caution, that, since we are ignorant of the purposes of God, future occurrences must present themselves to our understanding as so many possibilities, and that all his promises and threatenings must be received by us as under a condition either tacit or express.‡ And thus his views

\* James's Apology, c. vi. The last of the above-cited passages, turned into a prayer, gives us, precisely, one of our own Collects: "Lord, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works through Jesus Christ our Lord." Collect for the 17th Sunday after Trinity. See also Lewis, c. viii. p. 174, 175.

† See the quotations from Walden, in James's Apology, c. vi.

‡ This, if I comprehend it rightly, is the substance of the passage cited by Lewis, (c. viii. p. 178.) though the language is sufficiently obscure.

are found to be in unison with those of the soundest thinkers of our own times, whose sentiments may be summed up in the language of Dr. Hey:\* "Disputes on liberty and necessity are vain and idle; as much so as if you were placed within a spherical surface, and I without it, and we were to enter into abstruse arguments on the question, whether the surface between us were concave or convex. In my situation it is convex, in yours it is concave." If we consider events with reference to the Divine Mind, it seems utterly impossible to think of them as otherwise than fixed: if we consider them with reference to responsible agents, it seems as impossible to regard them as otherwise than contingent. This was clearly perceived by Wiclif; and he likewise appears to have been aware of the vanity of all attempts to reconcile, by a mere logical process, conditional decrees, with *absolute* foreknowledge, perfect independence, and unlimited sovereignty.†

In his application of the doctrine of necessity to theological subjects, Wiclif is sparing and cautious. In his *Triologus*, indeed, he says that "we are predestinated to obtain divine acceptance, and to become holy;" and professes it to be his opinion, that "this grace of predestination can by no means fail." But, whatever may have been the rigour with which he held this theory, the subject is but rarely introduced into his practical discourses. The *Triologus*, it must be remembered, was one of his more abstruse and scholastic lucubrations: and so long as the predestinarian question is confined to the Schools, its mischievous influence will be comparatively trifling. In his popular and pastoral compositions, the allusions to this unfathomable topic are but slight and transient; so that it may be reasonably hoped, he had

His predestinarian notions chiefly confined to his scholastic writings.

See also James's Apology, c. ix. Answer to the fourth objection of the apologists.

\* Lect. vol. iii. p. 248.

† See Lewis, p. 178.

not wrought himself into persuasion, that such speculations formed an indispensable ingredient in a scheme of sound religious belief.

It must be almost needless to state, that every thing which tends to exalt the creature into the place of the Creator, or to transfer to inferior beings any share in the work of mediation or intercession, was rigidly excluded from the faith of Wiclif. On the

Pilgrimages,  
and image wor-  
ship.

subject of images and pilgrimages, and invocation of saints, he is, perhaps, less copious than might be expected. That the use of images, (considered merely as the books of ignorant and unlearned laymen) was not forbidden, he most distinctly concedes; and he likens them to the wedding ring, which is cherished by the wife as the symbol of her attachment and fidelity to her husband.\* But though he considers the practice as lawful, it is quite evident that he does not regard it as safe: and he has a most watchful eye on the abuses to which it offers such powerful temptation. He conceives that the venom of idolatry lurks within it; and affirms that Papists, in effect, assimilate themselves to Pagans, when they attempt to repel the charge of idolatry, by the shallow pretext, that their devotions terminate not in the figure, but in that which it represents.† He, moreover, affirms, that when the dumb idol is honoured with costly offerings, and with such adoration as is due to God alone, it may lawfully be broken or burnt by Christian kings, with the assent of their lords and clergy, even as the brazen serpent was broken in pieces by Hezekiah, when the children of Israel began to offer incense to it. His perception of the vanity of all applications to men deceased, appears to have gained strength with his advance in life: for in one of his latest works, he censures it as folly to seek for any intercession but that of Jesus Christ; and, though he so

\* Lewis, c. viii. p. 175.

† James's Apol. c. viii. a. 6.

far conformed to the usage of the Church as to keep the festivals of the saints, yet he intimates plainly, that it might be as well if they were altogether abolished, so that men might celebrate the festival of Jesus Christ alone, and the devotion of the people might cease to be parcelled out among his members. And he concludes, that the multitude of canonizations may reasonably be ascribed to the decay of faith, and the growth of covetousness.\* In the early part of his life, indeed, his opinions on this subject may, possibly, have been less decided. But that he retained any erroneous impressions respecting it, at the close of his days, seems distinctly negatived by the clamours of his enemies, who speak of him as actually raving against the saints, and as visited with a frightful death for this, among his other manifold impieties.†

His notions relative to purgatory would seem, on the whole, to have been, Purgatory. in like manner, progressive; though it assuredly, cannot be affirmed that they ever advanced so far as to the total abandonment of that fiction. In one of his earlier writings, he expressly acknowledges, on the authority of St. Augustine, that souls in purgatory are helped and comforted by the alms and religious exercises of good men.‡ And in a subsequent treatise he allows, that saying of mass, with burning devotion, and holiness and integrity of life, is well pleasing to God, and profitable to Christian souls in purgatory.§ In another place he treats all the fearful sayings concerning purgatory, as things spoken by way of commination, and, as it were, so many pious falsehoods. He divides the church into three portions, the militant, the reposing, and the triumphant; and speaks of the Sabbath as prefiguring the *rest*

\* *Triologus*, c. iii. p. 30, 31.

† *James's Apology*, c. viii. s. 24, 25.

‡ *MSS. Cotton. Titus. D. xix. 129*, cited by *Vaughan*, vol. ii. p. 268.

§ *Sentence of curse expounded*, c. vii. cited in *Lewis*, c. viii. p. 161.



of those who *sleep* in purgatory.\* From which it would appear that, in his opinion, all that could be done by the prayers of the faithful would be to improve, in some indefinite manner, the condition of departed souls, in their intermediate state. All this, it must be allowed, is indistinct and unsatisfactory enough: but, vague as it is, it strikes directly at the root of the Romish doctrine and practice, which proved so vast a source of unholy emolument to the Church. As Dr. James remarks, "it thrusts the Popish purgatory clean out of doors: for there is little rest, and less sleeping there, if we believe them who have come from thence. And by this reason, if the fire of purgatory be clean put out, the smoke of it,—that is, prayers for the dead, must needs, in a very short time, vanish away."† It should further be recollected, that, whatever might by the efficacy of prayers for the deceased, that efficacy is repeatedly ascribed by him, to the devotions of the laity as well as those of the priesthood; nay, that, in his judgment, the prayer of the pious layman was, without measure, more availing than that of a worthless and reprobate prelate.‡ On the whole matter, therefore, it may reasonably be concluded, that, relative to the precise condition of the dead, his mind remained, to the very last, in a state of indecision; but that he never ceased to stigmatize the system of fraud, which converted the doctrine of purgatory into an engine for extorting immense revenues from the popular credulity and terror. He loudly accuses the clergy of "inventing pains, horrible and shameful, to make men pay a vast ransom;" and describes "all masses for which money is taken, as an artifice of Satan, and a contrivance of hypocrisy and avarice."§ It was no

\* Omnia dicta de purgatorio, dicuntur solummodo comminatoriè, tanquam pia mendacia. De Verit. Scripturæ, p. 267. Sabbathum prefigurat quietem dormientium in purgatorio. Ibid. p. 479. See James's Apol. c. viii. a. 24, 25. Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 22.

† James's Apol. c. viii. 24, 25.

‡ Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 289, 290.

§ On Prelates, c. iii. cited in Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 289.

ordinary strain of daring, in the fourteenth century, to make so fierce an irruption into these dark repositories of the Romish treasury!

Intimately connected with purgatory are the enormities of Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences; and here, at least, the trumpet of Wiclif gives utterance to nothing like an uncertain sound. It

Auricular Confession and Papal Indulgences.

It would be quite impossible to do justice to the intrepidity of his attack upon these fortresses, which Papal Rome had, in the course of ages, made so strong for herself, without much more ample citations than the limits of this work allow. It must suffice to say, that Luther himself never rushed to the assault with more desperate courage, than did his great predecessor, when once his spirit was roused by the sight of these impieties. He proclaims to the world,—not in the learned dialect of the Schools, but in plain and homely English,—that pardons and indulgences are mere forgeries, whereby the priesthood “rob men cursedly of their money;—that they are nothing but a subtle merchandise of Anti-Christ’s clerks, whereby they magnify their own fictitious power, and, instead of causing men to dread sin, encourage them to wallow therein like hogs.” And, as for the despicable pretext, that the payment was not demanded as the price of the pardon itself, but simply as a gratuity or fee for the instrument by which it was formally conveyed, he sarcastically exclaims, “Certes, then, a little dead lead\* doth cost many a thousand pound by the year, to this poor land!” and he adds, that the mockery is no less impudent than it would be to offer a fatted goose for nothing, but to charge a good round sum for the garlic with which it was to be seasoned!† To us, the exposure of these impostures, may seem but a light and unimportant matter. But, again, let it be considered, what it was for an individual to rise

\* The seal affixed to the Papal Bulls was of lead.

† See Lewis, c. viii. p. 168—171. Vaughan, vol. ii. 297—304.

up, and to talk thus to a whole nation, in an age when the possessions of men in this world, and their destinies in the world to come, were held to be at the disposal of an infallible and irresistible representative of God upon earth !

Excommunica-  
tion, and Papal  
Interdicta.

Still more admirable, if possible, was the sternness of his fulminations against another kindred abomination ; namely, that stupendous abuse of the power of the keys. This power, it is well known, has always been regarded, not only by the Romish, but by the Eastern Church, as the very axis on which alone the ecclesiastical system can revolve with regularity and steadiness ; and without which no Christian society can deserve even the name of a Church. The manner in which this terrific authority was frequently prostituted to the darkest passions, is indelibly written in the history of Christian Europe. We there learn that the very spirit of Druidism was, at last, transferred to the seat of the Vicar of Jesus Christ : so that the vengeance of an Italian Ecclesiastic could not only outlaw individuals from all the charities of our nature, but could almost suspend the health, yea, the very life, of whole communities. It is needless, however, to dwell on the miseries inflicted by the Papal sentence of Excommunication or Interdict, or on the terrors with which the power of the keys invested even the obscurest parochial priest. At this day the thunders of Rome may, in our ears, be like the sounding brass, or the tinkling cymbal. But in the age of Wiclif, it must always be remembered, they had power to "make mad the guilty and appal the free." They were uttered by a voice, at the wrathful sound of which all countenances *gathered blackness*. And yet these were the armories of heaven,\* which our countryman had the heroism to denounce and to defy ; and this, in the hearing of the

\* Armamentaria coeli. Juv.

whole realm of England, then one of the fairest portions of the Pontifical domain. Why, he exclaims, in one of his English treatises, do our wayward curates curse the souls of men to hell, and their bodies to prison, and doom them to forfeiture of goods, and loss of life, and all for the sake of paltry gain?—and this, too, while they themselves are accursed of God, for entering on their office by simony, and betraying it by abandonment of duty, and unholiness of living! The pains of hell, rather than tithes and offerings, are their proper recompense. They are rather malicious tormentors, than spiritual fathers to the souls of men. Pagan tyranny and persecution confined its rage to the body, but these children of Satan seek to plunge the soul into everlasting pain. Yea, they are worse than the fiends themselves; for the fiends torment no human soul, but for the measureless enormity of sin: while these clerks of Satan doom souls to hell for some trifling due, which poverty may disable them from paying, and which, after all, is no lawful debt, but a mere fraudulent exaction, founded on usages that have no warrant in the commandments of God.\* He hesitates not to add, that when prelates extend their execrations to all that shall commune with men, whom they have declared to be accursed, they may be said, virtually, to include the Almighty himself in their maledictions; for God assuredly does not cease his communion with the vilest outcast, so long as he affords him breath and sustenance, and is ready to restore him to grace and forgiveness. And well, he says, may men wonder at this prodigality of cursing, called forth, as it often is, not for false oaths, and infernal ribaldry, and other offences against the majesty of God and Christ—but for some invasion of the interests and privileges, and wayward customs, of the priesthood.† Fearful, almost beyond imagining, must

\* Great sentence of curse expounded, c. xvii. See Vaughan, vol. II. p. 283, 284.

† Ibid. c. xxv.

have been the abuses which, in that age of darkness, could have stirred the spirit of any man to denunciations like these; more especially of a man who never questioned the legitimacy of spiritual censures, as one essential department of ecclesiastical discipline, when duly and charitably administered, with a single eye to the promotion of holiness, and to the purification of the Church of God.

Papal power.  
Supremacy.

The whole of Wiclif's life is a perpetual commentary on his views respecting the authority of the Pope, whether temporal or spiritual. That he allowed a certain precedency of honour and authority to the Bishop of Rome, would appear from a passage in his treatise on the Truth of Scripture, in which he holds, that a man incurs the charge of Paganism, who scornfully refuses obedience to the Apostolic See: and we have seen that in his letter to the Pope, towards the close of his life, he addresses him as the greatest of Christ's Vicars upon earth. And it is highly probable that, if they who claimed to be the Vicegerents of God, had exhibited a preeminence of holiness at all corresponding to their supremacy of rank, he might have been prepared to render unto them all the reverence which could reasonably be claimed for the occupiers of the first See in Christendom. But he had no conception that this transcendent dignity and honour could adhere unalienably to men who often brought to the Apostolic Chair the worst passions of man's fallen nature. Neither spiritual infallibility, nor secular supremacy, could, in his judgment or belief, be the attributes of the "worldly priests of Rome, the most accursed of cut-purses, the evil man-slayer, and burner of the servants of Christ." Hence it is that his days were passed in incessant warfare against this "Master of the Emperor, this fellow of God, this Deity on earth," and against the whole army of clerical satellites and slaves, who conspired to bow the neck of Europe under his dominion. And whatever

may, at any period, have been his respect for the Pope, in the *ideal* perfection of his character,—of the *actual* Pope, he scruples not to pronounce that he is the veriest Anti-Christ.\* According to him, therefore, so long as Christ is in heaven, the Church hath in Him the best Pope: and no true man will dare to put two heads, lest the Church be monstrous.†

His passion for simplifying the Institutions of Christianity is strangely manifested in his opinions respecting the Hierarchy. The spiritual aristocracy in his time was, undoubtedly, a phenomenon which the primitive Evangelists, if they could revisit the earth, might be supposed to contemplate with measureless astonishment. And Wiclif, whose thoughts were constantly wandering back to the days of apostolic simplicity, had looked upon the Pontiff and his cardinals,—the patriarchs, archbishops and bishops,—the archdeacons, officials and deans,—and the whole inferior retinue of the Romish priesthood,—till his very heart grew sick at the spectacle of so much cumbrous and “*Cæsarean*” pomp, and sought relief in the persuasion that the two orders of priest and deacon, were the only ones which could plead the sanction of Holy Writ, or primitive institution. Whether he would have altogether discarded the Episcopal order, had he been allowed to carry into effect his own principles of Reformation,—or whether he would have retained it as a convenient and useful appointment,—it is impossible to pronounce with any certainty. But it seems perfectly clear that he did not consider it as at all essential to the legitimate constitution of a Christian Church.‡ It is deeply to be deplored that his powerful and independent mind, while it was rending in pieces the cords of superstition, should have tamely

Episcopacy.

\* Potissimus Anti-Christus. De Verit. Scripturæ, in James's Apology, c. iii. s. 4. On Prelates, c. xxii.

† Horn. Bib. Reg. p. 181. in Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 273, note 50.

‡ Lewis, c. viii. p. 154, 155. 157.

surrendered itself to the captivity of this miserable prejudice. "Had it pleased him not to hoodwink his own knowledge," he must have seen, clearly enough, how to dispose of his own objections. A divine like him can, surely, never have been ignorant that, from the time of the apostles, to the days in which he lived, no other form of government but the Episcopal had ever been known to the Christian Church; and he might have learned from his master, St. Augustine, that Aërius, the first person who ever thought of confounding bishops and presbyters, was judged to be a heretic for that opinion. And yet we actually find him asserting, that "by the institution of Christ, priests and bishops were all one; but that, afterwards, *the Emperor divided them*, and made bishops, lords, —and presbyters, their servants;" and, again, that "from the faith of Scripture, it seems sufficient that there should be presbyters and deacons, holding the state and office which Christ assigned them; since it appears that all other orders and degrees have their origin in the *pride of Caesar*."\*

It seems quite clear that the veil, in which he wrapped up his better judgment against the light of history, was no other than his detestation of the abuses which then dishonoured the episcopal office. "The ordinances of Christ," he says, in discussing this subject, "are founded in meekness, in unity, in charity, in contempt of riches and high estate." Of these apostolic qualities he discerned but very faint traces among the prelates of his day, and therefore he concluded, that they could not, even by their office and institution, be the successors of the apostles. That episcopacy existed long before the *pride of Caesar* meddled with the offices of the Church, antiquity bears witness; but the effect of this testimony was, probably, wiped away from his mind, by the

\* MS. on the Seven Deadly Sins. Cod. Ric. Jamesii. Bibl. Bodl. Trialog. lib. iv. c. 15. James's Apology, p. 31.

same "odd kind of shifting answer," which moved the indignation of Hooker, when it was produced by the fanatics of the Holy Discipline; namely, that "the bishops which now are, be not like unto them that were:" an argument, (as the venerable and judicious man remarks,) which would often be quite as effective against the legitimate power of kings, as the order and authority of bishops. It is truly wonderful that an intellect, disciplined like Wiclif's, in the severity of the Schools, should, in this instance, have been unable to "discern between the nature of things, which changeth not, and their outward and variable accidents." But from this, as well as from various other symptoms, it is evident, that the incessant contemplation of existing corruptions, had wrought up his spirit into something of a revolutionary temper; so that it would have been extremely unsafe to trust him with unlimited discretion in prosecuting the work of ecclesiastical reformation.

Respecting the Church itself, his notions are such as all the faithful mem- The Church.  
bers of our Establishment would do well to keep in mind at the present day. It is lamented by one who had imbibed his sentiments and principles,\* that "when men speak of Holy Church, they understand anon prelates and priests, canons and friars, and all men that have crowns, (tonsures,) though they live never so cursedly against God's law; and they clepe (call) not nor hold secular men to be of Holy Church, though they live never so truly after God's law, and end in perfect charity:" whereas the true notion of a Church comprehends the clergy, the secular lords, and the commons,—the lay members, in short, as well as the spiritual orders. The evils arising from this gross misconception are of the most opposite descriptions. In Wiclif's age, it invested the hier-

\* Lewis, c. viii. p. 152, from the Prologue, &c. It has been shown above, that this Prologue is not the work of Wiclif himself. But there is reason to believe that it generally speaks his sentiments.



archy with something like a Brahminical sacro-sanctity, and degraded the rest of the community into an inferior caste. In our own times, it exhibits the clergy as an order, in whose preservation the rest of society have but a slight and ambiguous interest. The same error, according to the varying complexion of the times, on the one hand, elevates the consecrated class to an almost praternatural immunity and power; or, on the other, places them in most injurious disunion from the rest of the social body, with which, in truth, they should be indissolubly bound up. It should never be forgotten that the ecclesiastical establishment alone does not constitute the Church; and that both the privileges and the responsibilities of churchmanship belong to the laity as well as to clergy, according to their several opportunities and stations.

In common with the soundest doctors, Church visible and invisible. he allows the distinction between the Church visible, and the Church invisible.

The former he calls the *very body* of Christ; the latter his *medlied* (or mixed) *body*; which includes men ordained to bliss, and hypocrites doomed to perdition.\* His fanciful and nugatory distribution of the Church militant into the clergy, the military, and the populace,† is scarcely worthy of notice. It would be a weariness to accumulate passages for the purpose of showing that he postponed the authority of the Church to that of the Holy Scriptures—that he disregarded tradition as a rule of faith co-ordinate with the written word—that he maintained that all things necessary to salvation might be found in the Sacred Volume, and that the oracles of God might freely be consulted by all Christian people. These opinions are profusely scattered throughout his writings, and were finally embodied in the mightiest of all his works, the translation of the Bible. As for the assertion

\* Lewis, c. viii. p. 152.

† Ibid. p. 153.

that the Church is of more authority and credence than the Gospel, he reprobates it as "a forecasting of Satan to destroy Holy Writ and the belief of Christian men, by means of Anti-Christ, and his false and worldly clerks."\* "Though we had a hundred Popes," he tells us, "and all the friars in the world were turned into cardinals, yet should we trow more the law of the Gospel, than all this multitude."†

There seems to be little doubt that, to the last, Wiclif acknowledged the sacraments of the Romish Church; for in one of his latest works he speaks of them as seven in number.‡ But then it may be questioned whether he attached to the word sacrament, a signification of such deep importance and solemnity as we have been accustomed to. He understands by it "a token that may be seen, of *a thing* which may not be seen with any bodily eye;" but he does not allow every sacrament to be generally necessary to salvation.§ With regard to Baptism, he denies the necessity of chrism, or of trine immersion, or of any thing more than the affusion of water. That he deemed the baptism of infants to be requisite, is evident from his concession, that females may be allowed to administer it to children in cases of urgent need: but he abstains from any presumptuous determination respecting the future condition of infants unbaptized. As a caution against formality or superstition, he warns men not to seek the worship of God too little, and their own too much; and adds, that priests must minister the outward token; but that the spiritual grace within, which we see not, is ministered to us of God, who is the priest and bishop of our souls. It is he alone that christeneth the soul, that is, washeth it from the uncleanness of all manner

\* Lewis, c. viii. p. 155.

† James's Apol. c. 1. s. 2. See also Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 212—317.

‡ Trialog. iv. 1.

§ Lewis, c. viii. 166.

of sin ; and therefore children, and sometimes men and women, are christened with water.\*

**Confirmation.** Of Confirmation he speaks as a rite, the importance of which has been much exaggerated, to the disparagement of *more worthy and needful sacraments*.† The ceremonies with which it was loaded, he condemns as unscriptural ; professes himself unable to see why this sacrament should be reserved to Cæsarean prelates ; and suggests that the short and trifling Confirmation performed by them, together with its pompous mummary, must, probably, have been introduced by the instigation of the devil, for the purpose of deluding the people, and advancing the importance and dignity of the Episcopal order.‡ It is scarcely possible to listen to this almost fanatical extravagance without astonishment, and even disgust. In perusing this passage, we could well nigh fancy that we had before us the very words of those intractable and self-willed spirits who, two centuries later, were demolished by the learning, the sanctity, and the incomparable irony of Hooker.§ Awful, indeed, is the responsibility of those, who, by their corruptions and perversions, have ever made the fragrance of truth to be abhorred ! Sacrament, or no sacrament, the rite of Confirmation, administered by bishops, has the sanction of Scripture, followed up by the testimony of the most venerable fathers, and by the immemorial usage of Christendom. And, yet, such was the dishonour brought upon it by frivolous and superstitious vanities, that, in the eyes of Wiclif, it seemed as little better than a worthless and unholy thing !

**Penance.** In what precise sense it was that Wiclif ascribed the sacramental character to absolution and penance, it would be very difficult to say. The act of confession to an intelligent

\* Lewis, c. viii. p. 166, 167.

† Sentence of Curse, &c. c. vii. Vaugh. vol. ii. p. 306.

‡ Trialog. iv. 14. Lewis, c. viii. p. 167. § Book v. s. 66.

and holy minister, accompanied by sincere contrition, and all the fruits meet for repentance, were, unquestionably, regarded by him as among the most profitable and salutary of religious duties.\* And since unfeigned penitence for sin is, undoubtedly, necessary to salvation, this mode of expressing sorrow, and seeking pardon, might be allowed by him to retain its place among the sacraments of the Church. It is, however, beyond dispute that he deemed the exercise of the sacerdotal office in this solemnity to be a matter of very subordinate importance. In making themselves the *principal* parties in *assoiling*, or absolving, the sinner, he affirmed, that the priesthood were blasphemers against the Father of heaven, to whom alone belongs the power of remission. The function of the priest he considered to be purely ministerial and declaratory. They are "vicars and messengers," ordained to testify that God grants absolution to the truly penitent: and when they take upon themselves to pronounce judicially the sacramental absolution, they are, in his judgment, usurpers of God's majesty, deceivers of the people, and encouragers of vice.† And he distinctly asserts, that "in schrift, though we tell our sins to a priest, and he put us on penance, we are assoiled never the rather, *but if* (unless) God, who is the priest of souls, see that we sorrow with all our hearts for our sins, and that we be in full purpose and will to leave them for ever after."‡

Episcopal Ordination, he expressly recognises as a sacramental ordinance: Ordination.  
but he seems to question whether it imprints an indelible character. The nature, or, as he terms it, the *quiddity* of this character, he tells us, is a matter of much dispute: and he therefore prays, that God would be pleased to confer on the clergy some further grace; the *character* in question being found in such a mul-

\* Great Sentence of Curse, &c. c. vi. Lewis, c. viii. p. 171.

† Of Prelates, MS. 43. Lewis, c. viii. p. 167, 168.

‡ Of the Seven Sacraments, MS. Lewis, c. viii. p. 168.

titude of instances, to be useless and ineffective. In speaking on this subject, he seizes the opportunity of reprobating the multiplied and intolerable exactions which were practised in conferring the sacerdotal office,\* and which gave to the transaction an appearance of Simoniacal trafficking.

**Matrimony.** His speculations respecting the sacrament of matrimony are strangely subtle and fantastical. He conceives it to have been ordained, not only for the perpetuation of mankind until the day of doom, and for the suppression of licentious intercourse, but also for the restoration and fulfilment of the multitude of angels damned for pride, and the completion of the number of the saints in heaven.† He condemns the practises of the courts which pronounce matrimony valid from words of consent; apparently forgetting that the secret intention is hidden from human judges, who are able to decide only from overt acts, and that, if the ordinance is to be considered as sacramental, it would, of course, require a sensible and outward sign.‡ He seems to question the application of the Levitical prohibitions to Christian societies, and even to contend for the restoration of the usages prevalent in the earliest ages of the world: marriage, within the very *closest* degrees of propinquity, being, in his opinion, condemned only by arbitrary human maxims, and institutions.§ This unnatural and unscriptural opinion

\* There is one of these enormities which seems, more especially, to move his virtuous indignation. Not only were exorbitant gratuities exacted for the Letters of Orders, but the authorized officiating barber was, usually, so unconscionable in his demands for executing the clerical tonsure, that a man, he complains, might actually be shaved and clipped for a whole year together, by an ordinary practitioner, for the same sum that was extorted by the official artist on this one occasion. This, says Wiclif, is a foul extortion! Lewis, c. viii. p. 157.

† Of Wedded Men and Wives, MS. c. l. Lewis, c. viii. p. 171.

‡ Trialogus, iv. 22. Lewis, c. viii. p. 172.

§ Tempore primi hominis, *fratres et sorores fuerunt, ex ordinatione divinâ, taliter conjugati*: et tempore Patriarcharum, ut Abraham, Isaac, et talium, satis propinquè cognati. Nec superest ratio, quare non sic liceret hodiè, nisi humana ordinatio, quæ dicit non solum ex cognatione,

can be ascribed to nothing but that species of infatuation, which is found, occasionally, to seize on minds of great energy, when once they become heated with the work of innovation. The notion is so monstrous, that it painfully weakens our reliance on his judgment. It may be said, almost, to resemble the dead fly, which giveth an evil savour to a whole vessel of the most precious ointment.

Respecting the Eucharist, it is, per- The Eucharist.  
haps, more easy to state with precision what he *did not* believe than what he *did*. He did not believe that the substance of Christ's body was miraculously substituted for that of the bread. He did not believe in any separation of accidents or qualities, from their proper subject. He did not believe, in short, that the visible emblems ceased to retain their own nature after the words of consecration. But that some sort of change was effected, he assuredly did believe; and that this change was of sufficient importance to warrant us in affirming that Christ's body is *really* present in the Eucharist. The precise manner of this presence he does not undertake to define; but contents himself with vaguely describing it as figurative or sacramental: and he conceives that many things are involved in this mysterious subject, which form no part of necessary faith, and which should neither be granted nor denied, but treated rather as matter of humble and reverent conjecture.\* One thing, however, appears indisputable; namely, that whatever may have been the perplexity of his opinions, he cannot, without the most resolute perversion, be charged with want of integrity or firmness, when called upon to support them in the face of the world.

The number of seven sacraments can- Extreme Unc-  
not be made up without admitting ex- tion.

*sed ex affinitate, amorem inter homines dilatarı: et causa hac hominum est nimis debilis.* Trialogus, lib. iv. c. 20, 21. Lewis, c. viii. p. 173.

\* Seven Deadly Sins, MS. Cod. James. Also, James's Apol. c. vii.

treme unction among them: and yet Wiclif has been charged with the heresy of denying to that rite the sacramental character.\* The truth probably is, that he suffered it to remain on the list of sacraments, without allowing it to be requisite to salvation; for we have seen that he did not consider all the sacraments to be of equal necessity and worthiness.

**Celibacy of the clergy.** The compulsory celibacy of the clergy, and the forcible imposition of monastic vows, he reprobates in the strongest terms, as practices tending to flagitious corruption of manners.† Prudent and "*measurable*" fasting he held to

**Fasting.** be salutary. But abstinence from flesh, only to indulge in fish, he derides as *fool-fasting*, and as nothing better than another form of gluttony: and fasting beyond the powers of nature, he censures as a mistaken and presumptuous emulation of Elias or of Christ.‡ Ceremonies, he allows

**Ceremonies.** to be useful, as sensible signs by which men may be led into the way of happiness, but deprecates the cumbrous and fantastic bravery,—the "pride, pomp, and circumstance,"—of the existing ritual; and he complains that the slightest neglect of these beggarly elements was more dreaded than the breach of God's commandments."§

**Church music.** Among the many "fretful and angry sentences" which fell from Wiclif, there are few which savour more strongly of fanatical austerity, than those which he has bestowed on the vocal and instrumental Psalmody of the Church. Nothing appears more vehemently to have moved his bile than what he is pleased to term the "novelrie of song," which had then been introduced into our religious services. He loudly complains that it not only di-

\* James's Apol. c. viii. s. 4.

† Order of Priesthood, MS. c. ix. *Wedded Men, &c.* MS. Lewis, c. viii. p. 163, 164. James's Apol. c. viii. s. 12, 13.

‡ James's Apol. c. viii. s. 13.

§ *Trilogus*, iv. 11. Lewis, c. viii. p. 174.

verted the attention both of priest and worshipper from their devotional duties, but was maintained at an enormous cost, which might be applied to much better purposes. Such, according to his representation, was the frivolity and artifice of these performances, that "it's small breking stirred vain men to dauncing more than mourning:" and he warns the "fools" who delight in it, that they "shulden dread the sharp words of Austin, that saith, As oft as the song liketh me more than doth the sentence sung, so oft I confess that I sin grievously." The temple services of the old law he rejects as models for the Christian worship, the best distinctions of which are its simplicity and spirituality. "And if," he observes, "they seyn that angels hearken God by song in heaven, seye that we kunnen not that song: they ben in full victory of their enemies; but we ben in perilous battle, and in the vally of weeping and mourning; and our song letteth us fro better occupation, and stirreth us to many great sins, and to forget ourselves. But our fleshly people hath more liking in their bodily ears, in such knacking and tattering, than in hearing of God's law, or speaking of bliss in heaven. . . . . When there ben fourty or fifty in a quire, three or four proud and lecherous lorels\* shullen knock the most devout service, that no man shall hear the sentence, and all other shullen be dumb, and looken on them, as fools. And then, strumpets and thieves praisen Sire Jack, or Hobb, and William the proud Clerk, how small they knacken their notes, and seyn that they serven well God and Holy Church; when they despisen God in his face, and letten other Christen men of their devotion and compunction, and stirren them to worldly vanity. And thus the true service of God is letted, and this vain knacking, for our jollity and pride, is praised above the moon."†

\* Worthless fellows.

† *Of Prelates*, c. xi. cited in Lewis, c. viii. p. 162, 163.



Here, again, we cannot well avoid to recognise the visitation of the same spirit, which, in after times, suggested, that the practice of chanting derived its authority from the contrivance of the Devil; by whose device it was, that this mode of singing was accounted as an invention of Ignatius, or an imitation of the angels of heaven! If the celebration of God's holy name were marred and dishonoured, in Wiclif's days, by unbecoming exhibitions of musical skill, the correction of the abuse was, doubtless, a worthy object of his anxiety. His language, however, leaves us under the impression, that he regarded all musical performance as an abomination, which ought to be ruthlessly banished from our public worship. "In Church music," says a Reformer of a very different complexion, "curiosity and ostentation of art,—wanton, light, or unsuitable harmony,—doth rather blemish and disgrace that we do, than add either beauty or furtherance unto it. On the other side, *the faults prevented*, the force and efficacy of the thing itself,—when it drowneth not utterly, but fitly suiteth with matter altogether sounding to the praise of God, is, in truth, most admirable; and doth much edify,—if not the understanding, because it teacheth not,—yet, surely, the affection, because therein it worketh much. They must have hearts *very dry and tough*, from whom the melody of the Psalms doth not, sometime, draw that, wherein a mind, religiously affected, delighteth."\*

It ought to be mentioned to the honour of Wiclif's sagacity and hardihood of mind, that he condemned Judicial astro- the insane vanities of judicial astrology. He distinctly affirmed, that the science of the astrologer was destitute of all foundation; that all his maxims and opinions rested on no substratum of knowledge.† To venture on such an assertion, in the fourteenth century, must have re-

\* Hooker, b. v. s. 38.

† Lewis, p. 174. Trialogus, lib. ii. c. 15.

quired no ordinary exercise of intrepidity and judgment.

It will easily be believed, that the opinions of an innovator, like Wiclif, surrounded as he was by exasperated and watchful adversaries, would be exposed to gross exaggeration and perversion. He, accordingly, makes frequent complaint, that notions were constantly ascribed to him, which, in fact, he never entertained. Of these, there is one so extravagantly profane, that it is difficult to imagine by what process of torture it can have been extracted from his writings. We have seen, above, that among the articles preferred against him at Oxford, he is charged with maintaining, that *God could not choose but obey the Devil!* And this charge, it appears, has since been repeated by Bellarmine, and the Jesuit Gretser; who, likewise impute to him another notion scarcely less monstrous, that *every creature is God*. This latter accusation must, doubtless, have been drawn from certain abstruse metaphysical speculations of Wiclif's, in which he intimates, that all the laws of truth, residing in the Divine Essence, are no other than God himself; nay, that every thing in the universe, considered with reference to its intelligible essence, is identified with the Deity.\* It is beyond my power to develop these obscure imaginings; but to suppose that they were intended by Wiclif to involve the unqualified impieties and absurdities of Pantheism, is, in effect, to maintain that a few sentences of abstract scholastic disquisition are to obliterate the testimony of a whole life. Surely, no synod of Inquisitors would burn a poet for saying, that all the glorious phenomena of nature "are but the varied God." And, if so, it would be difficult to see why the displeasure, even of the soundest divines,

Notions imputed to Wiclif, that God must obey the Devil; and that every creature is God.

\* Omnes veritatis leges in Essentiâ Divinâ, sicut omnia, sunt Deus. Again: Omnis res, secundum esse intelligibile, est Deus.—Expos. Decal. cited in James's Apology, c. ix. 10th and 11th Objections.

should rise against a Christian philosopher, who might contemplate a pervading Deity in the essence of all created things. As for the position, that *God must obey the Devil*, it is the raving of a maniac, rather than the aberration of a heretic. In what part of Wiclif's writings his enemies professed to read this blasphemy, I have not been able to discover. He says, indeed, that God is a title which is sometimes used in an absolute sense, at other times in a sense more qualified. It is properly applied only to the Lord of the universe: it is, however, often introduced to signify any other object which may usurp the adoration and service that is due to Him alone;\* (as when the commandment says, *Thou shalt have none other Gods but me* :) and over such a *God* as this, it cannot be denied, that the Devil may be supposed to exercise a very legitimate dominion. I have seen no other passage but this produced as the possible foundation for the charge in question; and one would imagine, that it must surpass even the subtlety and the malice of a Jesuit, to infer from the words "a conclusion so foul and irreligious," that, as Dr. James remarks, "scarcely any Devil of hell would dare to utter it."

Nothing could well be more useless, than to examine, minutely, all the perversions by which some of the most blameless of Wiclif's principles have been rendered questionable or odious. There are, however, some of his opinions which demand a more attentive notice, because they have tended to fix upon him the imputation of a deliberate revolutionist and spoliator. The course of our narrative has already brought this department of his speculations under occasional review: and the reader will recollect, that any attempt to vindicate the language, which was sometimes dictated by his burning zeal for improvement, has been

\* *Dei acceptio duplex; absolutè, Dominus Dominorum: quando contrahitur, vel specificatur, per signum detrahens, significat quodcunque bonum quod quis plus diligit. Expos. Decal. cited by James. Ibid.*

studiously disclaimed. Of the positions ascribed to him, the most formidable is—that *dominion is founded on grace*; a maxim which fanaticism might inscribe upon its banners; an oracle which, taken to the letter, cries *havoc* in the ears of the elect, and would soon let slip the dogs of war and anarchy upon the world. This watchword of rebellion has been described by a modern historian, as the cardinal and favourite position of the Reformer; a charge which, if clearly established, would be sufficient to fix dishonour on his memory, in the estimation of every friend of social order. Now, in considering this imputation, it must, in the first place, be recollected, that in his English writings, designed for the purposes of popular instruction, there are not more than two or three passages in which the slightest allusion to this dangerous maxim is to be found:\* and, secondly, that only one passage from his other compositions, has ever been produced by his accusers, in support of the charge; and even this is expressed by him in far too guarded and moderate a manner to inflict disturbance on any mind, which was not already prepared to find a heretical opinion.† He there observes, that, “as Christ, by the title of original righteousness, was master of all the possessions of the world, even so all things belong to the just, by the grace or favour of Christ.” But, then, far from making a dangerous use of this maxim, he immediately adds, that, “with this title of grace the just must rest content. They

Domination founded in grace; how understood and explained by Wiclif.

\* I assert this on the authority of Mr. Vaughan, who speaks with the confidence of one who has painfully examined all the writings of Wiclif, whether in manuscript, or in print.

† “Titulo originalis justitiæ habuit Christus omnia bona mundi; ut sæpe declarat Augustinus,—illo titulo, vel titulo gratiæ, justorum sunt omnia; sed longe ab illo titulo civilis possessio. Unde Christus et sui Apostoli, sprete dominatione civili, fuerunt de habitatione purè; secundum hunc titulum contentati. Ideo regula Christi est, quæ (quod?) nullus discipulorum suorum præsumat pro temporalibus suis contendere; ut patet, Matth. vi. qui aufert quæ tua sunt ne repetas. Sed longè sunt leges civiles, et consuetudo dominantium, ab illâ sententiâ.” Trialog. lib. iv. Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 236, note 6.

may be satisfied that the world is theirs; but they must on no account whatever presume to enforce their right by any worldly means; for the law of Christ expressly forbids his disciples to contend for temporal things, however clearly and rightfully their own." Surely the lords of the earth might hear, with profound composure, a claim to all the good things in it, provided it were accompanied by a law, which positively forbade the claimants to take a single step towards the enforcement of their visionary right. Nothing could well be less alarming than the doctrine in question, as thus guarded and qualified—nothing which could afford less ground for the suspicion that the holder of it was to be dreaded as a political incendiary!

It is remarkable, that St. Augustine has expressed himself on this matter with much less reserve than Wiclif; for he says, broadly, that every thing which is unworthily possessed, does not rightfully belong to the possessor; and that every thing is unworthily possessed, which is unworthily used: that the whole world is the portion of the faithful man; but that the unfaithful hath no just title to a single penny.\* And yet, who ever seriously imagined that the Bishop of Hippo intended to proclaim to the saints a crusade against wicked rich men, as having forfeited, by their vices, all title to their possessions?

\* *Omne quod malè possidetur, alienum est; malè autem possidet qui malè utitur; fidei homini totus mundus divitiarum est, infidei nec obolus.* See Lewis, c. viii. p. 142. This notion, it seems, had been adopted by the Albigenses: but, whatever may be its demerits, it is with a very bad grace that the Papists affected to reprobate it, professing, as they did, a doctrine still more dangerous to the peace of mankind; namely, that the lives and sceptres of kings are at the mercy of the Pope. "That dominion is founded in grace," says Fuller, "seemeth to be the very opinion of the Albigenses: yea, it hangeth as yet in the Schools upon the line, as a thing disputable, finding many favourers. But grant it a great error—(for wicked men shall be arraigned before God, not as usurpers, but as tyrants; not for not having right, but for not right using the creature,)—yet herein they proceeded not so far as the Papists now-a-days, to unthrone and depose excommunicated princes: so that they who do most accuse them, have least cause to do so." Fuller, *Holy War*, b. iii. c. 20.

It is, nevertheless, very greatly to be wished, that Wiclif, and all other writers, had rigidly abstained from language, which, in spite of every qualification attached to it, was liable to the most mischievous perversion. It might easily have been foreseen, that the maxim itself would speedily get abroad, without the explanatory words, which alone could make it innocent; that the title of the just would be remembered, and the prohibition to enforce it forgotten. It will immediately occur to every one, that the principle was actually thus abused, long afterwards, by the German Anabaptists, when they maintained, that the time was come for the *meek ones to inherit the earth*, their title thereto being the same as that by which the Israelites seized the property of the wicked Egyptians. Such wresting of the language of Scripture, at all times extremely perilous,—becomes objectionable, in a tenfold degree, when it assumes the form of a commentary on existing institutions, or even a denunciation of existing abuses. Neither can it safely be denied, that the words of Wiclif, in the mouth of many of his more ignorant followers, may have helped to impart something of a revolutionary character to the spirit of Lollardism, and to give a pernicious currency to the principle, that the saints are the only true and legitimate proprietors of all things. But that he himself actually designed, or contemplated any such extreme result, is, to me, absolutely incredible. All that we demand for him is, that he may stand or fall—not by a scholastic speculation, or an adventurous speech,—but by the general tenor of his popular teaching. And what that teaching was may be judged from the following passage, in which he enforces, with the deepest urgency, the scriptural principles of civil obedience.

Scriptural principles of civil obedience faithfully enforced by Wiclif.

“Christ,” says he, “and his apostles weren most obeisant to kings and lords, and taughten all men to

be suget to them, and serve them truly and wilfully in bodily works and tribute, and dread them and worship them before all other men.—Jesu Christ paid tribute to emperor, and commanded men to pay him tribute. And St. Peter commandeth, in God's name, Christen men to be suget to every creature of man, either to king as more high than other, either to dukes as sent of him to the vengeance of misdoers, and praising of good men. Also St. Paul commandeth, by aucturity of God, that every soul be suget to higher powers, for there is no power but of God. Princes ben not to the dread of good work but of evil work. Wilt thou not dread the potestate? do good, and thou shalt have praising thereof. For he is God's minister to them to good. Sothly if thou hast don evil, dread thou, for he beareth not the sword without cause; for he is God's minister, venger into wrath to him that doth evil. Therefore through need be ye suget not only for wrath but for conscience. Pay to all men debts, both tribute, and custom for things born about in the lond, and dread and honour and love. And our Saviour Jesu Christ suffered mekely painful death of Pilate, not excusing him for his jurisdiction by his Clergy. And St. Paul profered him ready to suffer death by doom of the emperor's justice, if he were worthy to death, as deeds of the apostles techen."\* Accordingly he blames the clergy of his time for being traitors to kings and lords in denying this obedience, because they pleaded to be exempt from the king's jurisdiction and chastising, and refused "to pay any subsidie, or tax, or helping of our king and our rewme, without leave and assent of the worldly priest of Rome." Well, therefore, might Wiclif say of himself and his followers, that they "destroien most, by God's law, rebely of servants agenst lords, and charge servants to be suget, though lords be tyrants."

\* Great Sentence of Curse Expounded. MS. c. 11.

Again, Wiclif saw himself surrounded on all sides, by such profligacy and oppression as seemed to intimate that they who called themselves the excellent of the earth, had well nigh lost all remembrance of the tenure by which men hold their possessions or their privileges *at the hand of God*. And he is accused of embodying his sense of these enormities in the following maxim,—“that no one in mortal sin hath a true dominion over any of the creatures *apud Deum*, in the sight of God: but deserves to be called a tyrant and a robber, although, by reason of some human law, he retain the name of king, or prince, or lord.” This is the language of his *Triologus*, as represented by his adversary Wodford:\* and it is, doubtless, quite in harmony with what has fallen from him in one of his English compositions. If temporal lords do wrongs and extortions to the people, they be traitors to God and his people, and tyrants of Anti-Christ.”† These, undoubtedly, are very bitter words. But they are not much more bitter than religion, and morality, and even history, have sometimes bestowed on men who were seated on the high places of the earth, and whose vices and oppressions have blackened the annals of the world. Besides, it must again be recollected, that, although the rights of the great might be forfeited by abuse, in the righteous estimate of God; the just, according to Wiclif, were in no condition to take advantage of the forfeiture, or to help themselves to the possessions of the delinquents. The disciples of Christ, he tells us, are positively forbidden even to seek their own, by any secular means; of course, therefore, they could never be warranted in aggressions upon the dominion or the property of the most worthless of mankind. However keen may be the sting of his expressions, they were put forth by one who was perpetually exhorting his own followers to abstinence from all

\* *Adversus J. Wiclefum*. See Lewis, c. viii. p. 142.

† *Ecclesiasm Regimen*. Lewis, c. viii. p. 142.



contention about worldly matters. Who can believe that it was his design to encourage the violation of that law, which commands us to *render unto all their due*, when we hear him uttering such complaints as these? "Prelates slander poor priests, and other Christian men, saying they will not obey their sovereign, nor fear the curse, nor keep the laws, but despise all things that are not to their liking, and that they are, therefore, worse than Jews or Pagans; and that all lords and prelates, and mighty men, should destroy them, or else they will destroy holy Church, and make each man to live as him liketh, and nothing may more destroy Christendom."\* He allows, indeed, that "the fiend moveth some men to say, that Christian men should not be servants nor vassals to heathen lords, since they are false to God,—nor to Christian lords, because they are brethren by nature, and bought by the cross of Jesus Christ, who made them free." But he adds, that "the apostles have written against this heresy in God's law." Once more,—“The feigned reason of Anti-Christ's clerks, is this,—if subjects may lawfully withdraw tithes and offerings from curates, who live in open lechery, or in other great sins, and do not their office, then servants and tenants may lawfully withdraw their service and rents from their lords, who live openly an accursed life.” But he replies, that “men are charged of God, by St. Peter and St. Paul, to be thus subject to *wicked lords*; and therefore Christ paid tribute, for himself and his apostles, to the heathen emperors.”† His “Short Rule of Life,” speaks similar language: “If thou art a labourer, live in meekness, and willingly do thy labour, that thy lord or thy master, if he be a *heathen* man, by thy meekness, willing and true service, may not have to grudge against thee, nor slander thy God, nor thy Christian profession. And serve not *Christian* lords with grudgings; not

\* De Obedientiâ Prelatorum, MS. apud Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 237, note 9.

† Of servants and lords, MS. cited by Vaughan, vol. ii. p. 238, 239.

only in their presence, but truly and willingly, and in absence: not only for worldly dread, or worldly reward, but for dread of God and conscience, and for reward of heaven."\* They who can peruse such passages as these, and yet contend that Wiclif either seriously meditated or desired the general overthrow of property and government, must be prepared to maintain that he was, not only a wild enthusiast, but a most execrable hypocrite.

With regard to unworthy churchmen, it must be confessed, his language is frequently much more unsparing and unqualified. He has been charged with heresy, as affirming that one who is living in mortal sin is neither bishop nor prelate; and the tenor of his writings does, undoubtedly, show, that it would have pleased him well, if human laws were rigorously to enforce that forfeiture of office, which he conceived profligate ecclesiastics to have already incurred in the just judgment of the Almighty. He has further been arraigned for maintaining that, temporal lords may, at their discretion, seize the possessions and estates of unfaithful churchmen. Now this is a posi-

\* Wiclif's writings, by the Religious Tract Society, p. 151.

That dominion is founded on grace, is a notion which, probably, lurks to this day in some of the dark corners of fanaticism. It is, indeed, one vital element of Antinomianism, "that thick-skinned monster of the ooze and the mire;" as appears from the following account, given by Wesley, of his conversation with one of the most oracular persons of that persuasion:—

Do you believe you have nothing to do with the law of God?

I have not. I am not under the law. I live by faith.

Have you, as living by faith, a right to every thing in the world?

I have. All is mine, since Christ is mine.

May you, then, take any thing you will, any where? Suppose, out of a shop, without the consent or knowledge of the owner?

I may, if I want it; for it is mine: only I would not give offence.

Have you, also, a right to all the women in the world?

Yes, if they consent.

And is not that a sin?

Yes, to him that thinks it sin; but not to those whose hearts are free.—Southey's Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 319. And this they call being *perfect* in Christ, not in themselves! One would gladly see such *perfection* under a scourge like that of Wiclif, in spite of all that has been said concerning his patronage of it.

Wiclif's opinions of the power of the State over Church property.

tion which has a more dangerous sound to modern ears, than it had to the ears of the generation to which it was addressed. When we hear of *temporal lords*, we are apt to think of noblemen, or land-holders, in their private capacity; and to suppose, that the intention of Wiclif was, to place the property of the Church at the mercy and *discretion* of every such individual proprietor. Whereas, in fact, the title of *temporal lords*, was, in those days, equivalent to that of temporal governors, or authorities; and understood in this sense, there is, undoubtedly, very sufficient ground for the imputation. That the endowments of the Church were at the disposal of the secular government, and that gross breaches of clerical duty ought to be punished with loss or confiscation, he most indisputably did maintain. He held, in short, the entire supremacy of the State over all orders and degrees of men, ecclesiastical as well as civil. In this respect his principles were at mortal variance with the established doctrine of the Papal Church; according to which, the possessions of the clergy were, under all imaginable circumstances, absolutely sacred and inviolable.\* The evil consequences of this doctrine had become so intolerable in the days of Wiclif, that he frequently cast away all moderation in his

\* In early times, the language of Genesis i. 16. had been modestly spiritualized, in its application to this subject. The *greater light* was considered as typical of the State, the *lesser*, of the Church. Six hundred years afterwards, it was discovered that this interpretation ought to be reversed; that, as there were two luminaries in the heavenly firmament, the sun and the moon, even so were there two in the social firmament, the pontifical power and the regal. It followed, of course, that, for the temporal authorities to touch the possessions of the Church, of which the Pontiff was the head, would be little better than an inversion of the order of nature and of providence. See Laud's Conference with Fisher, p. 203, 204; where also may be found a very curious specimen of Pontifical arithmetic. The earth was supposed to be seven times greater than the moon; the sun eight times greater than the earth: therefore the power of the Pope is forty-seven times greater than the power of the emperor. (It ought, surely to be fifty-six times greater.) What would have been the triumph of the Papacy, if philosophy had then discovered the actual proportion of these luminaries!

protest against it. The mischiefs it occasioned extorted from him a loud and almost incessant appeal to the wisdom of the ruling powers; whose province he contended it was, to see that there should be some connexion between the discharge of duty, and the enjoyment of enormous emoluments. And there can be no doubt that the urgency of his denunciations was greatly increased by the persuasion which he frequently expresses, that the spirit of Christianity was violated by the endowments of the clergy;\* and that "*venom was poured into Church*," on the very day which first invested her ministers, as such, with the rights of property. He was withheld by no scruples in denouncing the abuse of revenues, held by a title which he conceived to be doubtful, if not positively vicious; and the vehement language in which he clamoured for a reformation of it, must, beyond all question, have sounded, in the ears of many, as a welcome signal for spoliation.

Wiclif considers Church endowments as inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity.

Among the hardest of Wiclif's doctrines, relative to clerical emoluments, may be reckoned that which he held respecting tithes. He, every where, speaks of them merely as *alms*; an expression which seems to imply, that the clergy were to be left to the mercy, the caprice, or the conscience of their parishioners. Some consideration has already been bestowed upon this opinion of the Reformer; and it has been intimated that his view of this matter was, mainly, suggested by the fact, that all church property, of every description, originated in voluntary bounty, and might, therefore, without impropriety, be regarded as *eleemosynary*.

Tithes represented by him as *alms*

\* That such was his conviction, appears constantly in his writings; and nowhere more evidently, than in the continuation of the passage last quoted from the *Triologus*, lib. iv.; in which he complains that "*leges iste mundanæ, et executio furiosa illarum, sunt, tam culpabiliter, inter Clericos introductæ. . . . . Nam habere civiliter, cum necessitate ad solitudinem circa temporalia, et leges hominum observandas, debet omnino clericis interdici.*"

And this presumption is fortified by his assertion, that it is the province of kings and others, to rectify, or to regulate, *the alms of their progenitors*.\* After all, however, it would be idle to disguise, that his language, on this subject, is generally so unqualified, as still to leave it doubtful, whether he did not consider every congregation,—nay, every individual of the congregation,—as at liberty to withhold all payments from the minister, whenever they might be pleased to imagine that his life was such as rendered him unworthy of their liberality. Most assuredly it *was* his doctrine, that the indignant layman was infinitely less culpable in refusing tithes or offerings, than the unfaithful clergyman in disregarding his sacred obligations. The truth is, that his thoughts were constantly attracted towards the model of apostolic poverty. He himself went often barefoot, clad in a gown of frieze; and his poor itinerant priests usually did the same. It can, therefore, scarcely be doubted that he would most gladly have seen the Ecclesiastical Order reduced to a much closer conformity with the primitive example, and made more dependent, for their support, on the zeal and painfulness of their own ministrations. And, as the clergy of his time were compelled to a life of celibacy, comparatively moderate funds would be sufficient for their subsistence. It would be useless to plunge into a long discussion as to the wisdom or the folly of these notions, in a work, the chief object of which is to ascertain the actual sentiments of the man. It is, however, quite indispensable, that he should be vindicated from the imputation fixed upon him by the misconception of certain of his apologists. Misled by his use of the word *alms*, they imagined that he would have condemned the ministers of the Gospel to beg their bread.† Now, a great part of his life

\* Interest regum et aliorum rectificare *eleemosynas progenitorum suorum*. De Verit. Script. p. 466. James's Apol. c. ix. obj. 5.

† James's Apol. c. ix. obj. 2 of the apologists. I have thought it quite

was passed in one uncompromising struggle against religious mendicancy; and this circumstance alone might surely have satisfied his friends, at least, that, even if he wished to consign the clergy to the spontaneous bounty of their people, he would never have thought of driving them to solicit their maintenance from door to door.

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Such was this great pioneer of the Reformation. That he was apt to ply the axe with indiscriminate violence, would be scarcely reasonable to deny; with such violence, indeed, that he, *occasionally*, seems to work like one, who was rather making a regular *clearance* for the foundation of new edifices, than ridding the earth of the rubbish which encumbered and deformed the old. All this vehemence of action, however, is precisely such as must, sometimes, be expected from natures like his, with their excess of athletic vigour, and their fervid impatience of wrong. Capacious and overruling spirits are scarcely ever sent into this world, but "they have something in them dangerous"—something which it may be our wisdom to fear, provided our apprehensions degenerate not into blind and abject consternation. There is terror in the voice of the tempest, and there is often destruction in its course; but its breath may sweep away the pestilence, and lash the elements out of their corrupt stagnation. The Lord himself, it is true, is not always in the fire, the whirlwind, or the earthquake; and yet these wild and fearful agencies may, from time to time, be needful, to prepare the

unnecessary to load the pages of a compendious work like this with interminable citations from Wiclif's writings, in support of the above representations of his principles. My statements are the result of a careful examination of the materials before me. Any person desirous of ample details may find them in Dr. James's Apology, and in the works of Mr. Lewis and Mr. Vaughan.

hearts of men for the accents of the still small voice. To be appalled, therefore, at the working of those mighty energies by which the destinies of this world are often moulded, may, peradventure, be to manifest something like a distrust of God's wisdom and providence. Of the instruments employed by him for the gradual destruction of a corrupt system, Wiclif may surely be reckoned among the most formidable, both for weight and keenness: and it can scarcely be a subject of wonder, though it may be of deep regret, that while this weapon was busy in the ranks of error, its sway should have frequently been perilous to the closely neighbouring truth.

Notions of the Reformation, as it would, probably, have been affected by Wiclif.

In estimating his rank among the great intellects which have influenced the fortunes of mankind, we shall hardly, perhaps, be justified in assigning him a place with those who have been most distinguished for philosophic depth, or steadiness of judgment. The foregoing survey of his labours and opinions must show, that he was too violently agitated by the evil which, in his time, was done and suffered under the sun, to weigh or measure, with the necessary firmness of hand, the expedients needful for its correction. Admirable as he was, he seems to have been somewhat better fitted for the business of demolition than of building up. As the fearless assailant of abuse, nothing could well be more noble than his attitude and bearing. But, had he succeeded in shaking the established system to pieces, one can scarcely think, without some awful misgivings, of the fabric which, under his hand, might have risen out of the ruins. If the reformation of our Church had been conducted by Wiclif, his work, in all probability, would nearly have anticipated the labours of Calvin; and the Protestantism of England might have pretty closely resembled the Protestantism of Geneva. Episcopal government might then have been discarded—ecclesiastical en-

dowments and foundations might have been, for the most part, sacrificed—the clergy consigned to a degrading dependence on their flocks—the worship of God, if not wholly stripped of its ritual solemnity, yet deprived of the aids of instrumental harmony—and, lastly, the fatalism which lurked in the scholastic writings of the Reformer, might then, possibly, have raised up its head, and boldly demanded a place in the Confession of the National Church! Had Wiclif flourished in the sixteenth century, it can hardly be imagined that he would have been found under the banners of Cranmer and of Ridley. Their caution, their patience, their moderation, would scarcely have been intelligible to him; and rather than conform to it, he might, perhaps, have been ready, if needful, *to perish, in the gainsaying* of such men as Knox or Cartwright. At all events, it must plainly be confessed, that there is a marvellous resemblance between the Reformer, with his poor itinerant priests, and at least the better part of the Puritans, who troubled our Israel in the days of Elizabeth and her successors. The likeness is sufficiently striking, almost to mark him out as their prototype and progenitor: and therefore it is, that every faithful son of the Church of England must rejoice with trembling, that the work of her final deliverance was not consigned to him. It must be regarded as providential, that he was raised up precisely at the time when his peculiar qualities could be most serviceable. A mighty engine was required, whose momentum might shake and loosen the cyclopean masonry of the Papal fabric, and thus prepare for the labours of wiser and sedater men. For this service Wiclif was incomparably adapted: and the faithfulness and courage with which he performed it must demand the warmest gratitude of Protestants to the latest generations.

Before we retire from our contemplation of Wiclif, it is but equitable to remind the reader, that, in one particular, The belief prevalent in his time, that Satan was loosed.



the times in which he lived were singularly adapted to engender a fierce spirit of opposition to existing establishments. In those days, there wandered about Christendom a persuasion, that the world had seen an end of the Apocalyptic period of a thousand years, during which Satan was to be bound, and that he was then actually loosed from that confinement, and was in the full exercise of his remaining privilege of mischief.\* To this opinion there are repeated allusions in the writings of Wiclif. He seems to speak of it as a thing beyond all controversy; and to consider the Christian community as, once more, exposed to the desperate malice of its invisible persecutor and adversary. Now it will easily be understood that a notion like this would be very

likely to create the wildest disturbance in any brain which was firmly possessed by it. When once a man of an impetuous and fervid temperament, is fully

*Its probable influence upon his views and opinions.*

persuaded that the spirit of Anti-Christ, and the powers of darkness, are actually let loose upon the world, he will be apt to contemplate the dominant institutions with certain feelings of suspicion and alarm. All the corruptions which might deform the Church, and all the oppressions which might burden society, would readily be ascribed by him to some preternatural and infernal instigation. Arbitrary kings, tyrannical and profligate nobles, selfish and worldly ecclesiastics—all would be regarded as immediate agents of the Evil Potentate—all would appear to be revelling, as it were, in that carnival of wickedness and delusion, which was to precede the final consummation of all things.

Something of this sort of half-fanatical excitement occasionally betrays itself in the writings and the la-

\* See the beginning of the Fifth Book of Fox, from which it appears, that some reckoned the thousand years from the birth of Christ; others, as he conceives, more correctly, from the cessation of the Church's sufferings in the days of Constantine. According to either supposition, the period had expired previously to the birth of Wiclif.

hours of the Reformer. It may possibly be this which helped to reconcile him to those hazardous speculations, which were thought to menace the rights of property, and to hold up all wicked men to public hatred, not merely as unworthy members of society, but as little better than robbers and usurpers. It is this too, we may reasonably presume, which often prompted him to describe the whole hierarchy of that day as clerks of Anti-Christ, and servants of the Fiend : and to represent the Mendicant Orders as the "tail of the dragon which drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them on the earth." And though he is always for sparing the persons of clerical delinquents, he frequently speaks like one who is prepared for a sweeping destruction of their whole apparatus of iniquity. The extreme danger of such feelings and opinions may now, of course, be easily discerned : but even they who most cordially disapprove them, must, at least, be prepared to allow, that they assisted to swell the torrent which was destined to cleanse away the Augean accumulation of ages.

## CHAPTER X.

## WICLIF'S OPINIONS.

*Wiclif's Poor priests—Wiclif's tract, "Why Poor Priests have no Benefices." viz. 1. Their dread of simony—2. Their fear of mispending the goods of poor men—3. That Priests are obliged to preach, whether beneficed or not—John Aston—John Purney—William Swinderby—William Thorpe—Nicolas Hereford—Philip Repingdon—Richard Fleming—Knighton's representation of Wiclif's followers—The fanatic John Ball, not a disciple of Wiclif—The Insurrection of the Peasantry falsely ascribed to Wiclif and his followers—Attributed by the Commons to the oppression of the Peasantry—Encouragement afforded to Wiclif by the great—Edward III.—Johanna, Queen Dowager—John of Gaunt—Anne, Queen of Richard II.—Richard II.—Various Noblemen and Knights—Lord Cobham.*

**Wiclif's Poor Priests.** IT has already been intimated, that the doctrines and principles of Wiclif were disseminated almost throughout the realm by the exertions of certain travelling preachers, whom he denominates "Poor Priests;" and whose activity and usefulness is occasionally celebrated by him in the course of his later writings. A brief account of this class of persons may, therefore properly find a place in this work. There can be little doubt that these are the individuals alluded to in the preamble to that unconstitutional ordinance which was obtained by archbishop Courtney in 1382; in which we have seen them described as persons affecting peculiar sanctity and simplicity of manners, and making the fairs and markets through the kingdom, as well as the churches and church-yards, the scene of their *irregular* ministrations. Most *irregular* they unquestionably were; for they were performed in open disregard of ecclesiastical authority. None of these zealous men ever thought it necessary to obtain the sanction of a license from his ordinary; and, with all of them, *itinerancy*

was the very life and soul of their vocation. By their itinerant labours it will be recollected, the Mendicant Orders had, for a time, achieved wonders in reviving the torpid faith of Europe, or, at least, in rekindling her fidelity to the visible head of the Church upon earth. It might, therefore, very naturally occur to a reformer, that the instrument which accomplished so much for the cause of superstition, might very profitably be employed in the service of reformation. Accordingly, towards the latter part of his life, the kingdom was traversed, nearly from one end of it to the other, by a multitude of preachers, under the sanction and encouragement of Wiclif. They imitated the Friars in their vagrant mode of life, in their incessant activity, and in their professed renunciation of all worldly pomp and superfluity; and, though they did not solicit contributions from house to house, they, undoubtedly, relied for their support on the voluntary bounty of their hearers.

A full exposition of the habits and the principles of these effective auxiliaries is given us by Wiclif himself in his treatise, "Why Poor Priests have no benefices," and, consequently, why they have no fixed or stationary duties. In this tract, three principal reasons are assigned for their adopting this mode of advancing the cause of scriptural truth. Of these reasons, the *first* is, their dread of simony. No man, it is alleged, could, in those days, obtain a benefice, without making certain payments, or submitting to certain conditions, which, as they imagined, gave a most unholy and mercenary character to the appointment. The prelate had his demand for first-fruits; and his officers had their demand for fees and gratuities; and to acquiesce in such extortions, as a condition of being allowed to exercise their ministry, was conceived to be, in spirit, grossly simoniacal. The exactions of the lay patron, it seems, would often be of a still more degrading na-

Wiclif's tract  
"Why Poor  
Priests have no  
benefices."

1. Their dread  
of simony.

ture: for the nominee, on accepting his benefice, would be expected to violate his sacred character by descending to the performance of some worldly office, for the gratification or the profit of his benefactor. To pay for their preferment by such a desecration of themselves, they regarded as simony of the very deepest die. All who were unmolested by these scruples, whatever might be the profligacy of their lives, found but little difficulty in obtaining benefices involving the care of many thousand souls; while they who manifested nothing but a desire to live righteously and soberly, and to teach truly the law of God, had little to expect but slander and persecution. They were stigmatized as hypocrites, as teachers of novelties, or to comprehend all enormities in a single word, as heretics. Against them, therefore, the door of promotion was hopelessly closed up. The laity, indeed, as Wiclif further informs us, would occasionally abstain from the exaction of pecuniary payments, in the exercise of their patronage; but then they hoped to disguise the simoniacal character of the transaction, by accepting nothing but "a kerchief for the lady, or a palfry, or a tun of wine;" and even, if the lord himself were desirous of presenting a man purely for his worth, the lady would frequently interfere, and contrive that "a dancer should be presented, or a tripper on tapits, or a hunter, or a hawker, or a wild player of summer gambols." All these practices are loudly condemned by Wiclif, as treasonable to the majesty and holiness of God; and as involving in the most odious guilt of simony the patron who presents, the prelate who institutes, the curate who accepts the benefice, and, finally the confessor who fails to reprobate such proceedings, whenever they fall within his knowledge. The poor priests, therefore, finding the path to preferment so fearfully beset by sin, felt themselves constrained by conscience, to the exercise of an irregular and unlicensed ministry.\*

\* Vaughan, vol. iii. p. 164—166.

Another of their scruples arose from their extreme apprehension of "mis-spending the goods of poor men." Every portion of clerical emolument that might remain, after supplying the most moderate exigencies of nature, was regarded by them as the rightful patrimony of the indigent; whereas the usages of those days, as they affirmed, compelled the clergy to waste this sacred residue on the rich, the worthless, and the idle. The rapacity of patrons and prelates, and ecclesiastical functionaries, together with the custom of prodigal entertainment and luxurious living, swallowed up the resources of charity: and, if any one should affect more simple and frugal habits, he was sure to be harassed by every form of calumny and molestation. Besides, the parochial clergy were frequently converted by the hierarchy into instruments for pillaging the poor. They were perpetually wearied and degraded by the letters of their ordinaries, commanding them to wring money from the hard hands of their necessitous congregations, by the terrors of ecclesiastical censure and anathema, and thus to become the ministers of avarice and extortion. "So many cursed deceits," exclaims Wiclif, "hath Anti-Christ brought up by his worldly clerks, to make curates mis-spend poor men's goods, and not truly to do their office; or else to forsake all, and to leave the clerks of Anti-Christ as lords of this world, to rob the people by feigned censures, and to teach the lore of the fiend, both by open preaching, and the example of an accursed life." Abuses such as these, in the judgment of Wiclif and his disciples, were sufficient, of themselves, to convert non-conformity almost into a positive obligation,

They had yet another motive for declining preferment: but it was of a much more questionable description than the former. They contended that the want of a benefice afforded no dispensation from

2. Their fear of "mis-spending the goods of poor men."

3. That priests were obliged to preach, whether beneficed or not.

the duty of preaching. Their commission, as they contended, authorized and required them to be instant, in season and out of season, wherever they might help their brethren heavenward, whether by their teaching, their prayers, or their example. Their charge they maintained to be as general as the mission of Christ and his apostles! They were free to fly from one city to another, "when persecuted by the clerks of Anti-Christ," conformably to the injunctions of Christ himself. Without the challenge of any human authority or jurisdiction, they might dwell wherever their ministry would be most profitable, and for such time as might be convenient, "*after the moving of the Holy Ghost*," and the example of Christ and his apostles was better observed by living on the voluntary alms of their followers, than in receiving tithes or offerings, conformably to the customs ordained by sinful men. "For these dreads," he says, "and for a thousand more, and for to be more like Christ and his apostles, and more to profit their own souls, and other men's, some poor priests think, with God, to travel about where they shall most profit, and by the evidence that God giveth them, while they have time, and a little bodily strength and youth." We have here the principles of a complete system of itinerancy, subject to no other control whatever, except the supposed direction of the Holy Spirit, and entirely independent of all human superintendence or authority. On the manifold evils that might result from such a system, if divested of all qualification, it must be quite needless to enlarge. Such qualification, however, Wiclif conceived himself to supply, in the declaration, "that neither he, nor his poor priests, presumed to condemn curates who do well their office, and dwell where they shall most profit, and teach, truly and stably, the law of God, against false prophets, and the accursed deceptions of the fiend." It would appear, therefore, that in some respects, he might be styled the Wesley of his day. He

did not, it is true, itinerate himself; neither does it appear that he encouraged laymen to take upon themselves the office of public religious instruction. But he gave his express and deliberate sanction to the practice of itinerancy and field preaching, though without pretending to supersede the regular and faithful ministrations of the parochial clergy. In one particular, indeed, he had clearly the advantage of Wesley. The modern Reformer lived in times when the law and practice of the established Church gave no countenance to this species of missionary proceeding. Whereas Wiclif had constantly before his eyes the phenomenon of itinerant mendicancy; and might, therefore, be excused for wishing to improve, and to convert to salutary purposes, a usage, which had the avowed sanction of Christ's vicar upon earth.

The persons who took upon themselves the exercise of an unlicensed ministry, in defiance of all ecclesiastical discipline, ought, unquestionably, to have counted the cost of the irregular warfare upon which they had voluntarily entered. It is to be charitably presumed that this computation had been faithfully made by the generality of those persons, to whom the reformer lent the sanction of his name. It must, however, be frankly confessed that, if we were to estimate their firmness by the example of several among them, respecting whom some distinct account has been preserved, we might be strongly tempted to doubt whether they went forth to their work in the genuine spirit of martyrdom. Of these reforming missionaries, John Aston was one of the most energetic and untiring. John Aston.

He seems to have been the very model of a poor itinerant priest. He is described as one who had nearly shaken off all the incumbrances of the flesh. He travelled on foot, with his staff in his hand. He was in continual circuit among all the parishes in every part of the kingdom. He scarcely ever suffered



the need of refreshment to interfere with the prosecution of his labours. He is, accordingly, compared by the chronicler, Knighton, to a bee perpetually on the wing; or to a hound, in constant readiness to start up from his repose, and to bark at the slightest sound. It further appears that he was not content with publishing the conclusions of his master, but added a multitude of novelties of his own coinage: and, like most of his brethren, he affirmed that the *poor priests* were the only true preachers, and that all the rest of the clergy were preachers of falsehood.\* This man was among those followers of Wiclif, who were summoned before Archbishop Courtney, at the synod of the Preaching Friars; and his demeanour on that occasion was remarkable for its boldness and pertinacity.† He was repeatedly urged by the primate to address the court in Latin, lest his statements should convey error, or excitement, to the minds of the ignorant by-standers. With this injunction he positively refused to comply. On the contrary, he addressed the auditors in English, with so much vehemence, that it was thought expedient to hasten the proceedings, and without further delay, to pronounce against him the sentence of excommunication.‡ From a sturdy evangelist like this, one might, perhaps, be prepared to expect a stern defiance of ecclesiastical censure. Nevertheless, it appears that the terrors of persecution were, after all, too much for his courage. It is affirmed, indeed, by William Thorpe, in the course of his examination before Archbishop Arundel, in 1407, that this John Aston taught the doctrine of Wiclif, "and used it himself; right perfectly to his life's end."§ But it is difficult to reconcile this assertion with one undoubted fact; namely, that by the letters of the archbishop, dated November 27, 1382, he was restored to the school exercises, in consideration of his having renounced

\* Knighton, p. 2568, 2569.

† Wilk. Conc. p. 164.

‡ Wordsw. Eccl. Blog. vol. i. p. 132.

and anathematized his heretical opinions.\* The conclusion, therefore, seems inevitable, that he once retreated most unworthily from the position which he maintained at first with so much intrepidity. Of his recovery we have no other intimation, except that which may possibly be implied in the above assertion of Thorpe's.

Another of Wiclif's distinguished coadjutors was John Purney, or Purvey. This man, as we are informed by Knighton, was of a grave aspect, affecting an appearance of sanctity beyond his fellows. His dress was that of an ordinary person. He was wholly regardless of his ease, and unwearied in journeying through the land, for the purpose of enlightening and converting the people. He was, indeed, the personal friend and companion of Wiclif; and having, thus, drunk deeply of his doctrine, was passionately devoted to the work of a reformer. In his sermons, he is said to have assailed with the deadliest detraction all preachers but those of his own sect; and, more especially those of the Mendicant Order. His vehemence and boldness brought upon him, at length, the weight of the ecclesiastical arm. He was seized, and cruelly tortured, by order of Archbishop Arundel. His faith was unequal to the trial; and he pronounced his recantation at Paul's Cross in 1396.† The rest of his story is deplorable enough. The archbishop rewarded his *repentance* with a benefice; and the following is the language in which that prelate afterwards spoke of him to William Thorpe.‡  
 "Thou, and such other losels of thy sect, would shave your beards full neere, for to have a benefice. For, by Jesu, I know none more covetous shrews then ye are, when that ye have a benefice. For lo! I gave, to *John Purvey* a benefice but a mile out of this castle,

\* Wilk. Conc. p. 169. Lewis, c. x. p. 262—266.

† Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 260.

‡ See "the Examination of William Thorpe, penned with his own hand." Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 130.

(Saltwood): and I heard more complaints about his covetousness for tithes, and other misdoings, then I did of all the men that were advanced within my diocese." All this, Thorpe was unable to deny. He could only answer, that it was not for the sake of the benefice that Purvey was then on the archbishop's side, but, because he had faithlessly abandoned his former doctrines and principles. And when Thorpe was urged to follow Purvey's example, and that of Hereford,\* he said that their example would have been good had they persevered in a life of simplicity and poverty: but, he adds, "since they had slanderously and shamefully done the contrary, (consenting to receive, and to have and hold temporal benefices, living more worldly and more fleshly than they did before, conforming themselves to the manner of this world,) I forsake them herein, and in all their fore-said slanderous doing." Whether Purvey lived to repent of his retraction, is uncertain. It appears, however, not altogether unlikely; for he was a second time imprisoned by Archbishop Chicheley in 1421, and probably died in confinement.†

William Swin-  
derby.

William Swinderby was another of these preachers. He was called by the people, William the Hermit. He is represented by Knighton as a man of inconstant temper, and unsettled habits. He first signalized himself at Leicester, by a somewhat rash and perilous assault upon the pride and vanity of women. His ungracious freedom of speech excited the wrath of all the females in the place, both good and bad, to such a degree, that they were ready to stone him out of the town. He next attacked the merchants, and nearly drove some of them to despair, by declaring that no rich man could enter the kingdom of heaven. He then, for a time, became a recluse, and was enabled to indulge

\* See "the Examination of William Thorpe, penned with his own hand." *Worsh. Eccl. Biogr.* vol. i. p. 203, 204.

† Lewis, c. x. p. 267—270.

his passion for solitude, by the bounty of the Duke of Lancaster, who allowed him a house within his park, and provided him with a maintenance. Growing weary of total seclusion, he was taken into the abbey for a time: but his fondness for itinerancy soon returned, and forced him out, once more, to a conflict with the corruptions of the world, in company with one W. Smith, a deformed blacksmith, who was driven by a disappointment in love to habits of ascetic moroseness. His denunciations were now levelled against the enormities of the Church, a theme which was sure to find him an abundance of willing hearers. When Bokyngham, Bishop of Lincoln, attempted to restrain him, he made a pulpit of two mill-stones, in the high-street of that city, from which he proclaimed that, *in spite of the Pope's teeth, he could and would preach in the King's highway, so long as he had the good will of the people.* He was preserved from the full severity of punishment, which otherwise would have awaited him, by the intercession of the Duke of Lancaster; but was, nevertheless, compelled to abjure his conclusions. Being deeply depressed by the disgrace of his retraction, he fled to Coventry, resumed his former habits, and was recovering his popularity; when he was expelled by the diocesan with shame and contempt. This is the substance of Knighton's account. One fact is added to it by Walsingham, which, if credited, may help to explain Swinderby's escape from worse consequences; namely, that when the Bishop of Lincoln had made preparations to correct him, and to take from him his license to preach, the multitude raged so violently as to frighten the bishop, and deter him from further proceedings against the heretic.\*

It must be fairly acknowledged, that the picture here presented to us, of a poor travelling priest, is very far from honourable to that class of agitators.

\* Lewis, c. x. p. 271—276.

It exhibits a combination of rashness and inconstancy which might have reflected discredit on the very best of causes. It is true that the above narrative,—like every other recital of the monkish annalists, when the Lollards are their theme,—must be received with very considerable caution. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the account of William Swinderby, preserved to us by Fox, is scarcely more creditable to his fortitude, than that of the Popish chronicler. In perusing the details, indeed, in Knighton and in Fox, we seem to be reading the histories of two different men. In the martyrologist,—whose authority is the Episcopal Register of Hereford,—we find abundant complaints against him, for “perverting the whole Ecclesiastical State, and stirring up schism between the clergy and the people;” but not one syllable of his fanatical proceedings at Leicester; nothing of his urging the damsels and matrons to fury, by his preachment against feminine frivolities; nothing of his driving merchants to despair, by declaring the rich incapable of salvation; nothing of his restless temper, or of the frequent and capricious change of his habits and pursuits. The substance of what is told us by Fox is simply this. In 1389, William Swinderby, priest, was presented before the Bishop of Lincoln, upon certain articles, in which—as he afterwards complained—his real opinions were maliciously distorted. His accusers were Mendicants, and so hotly did they long for his destruction, that they brought dry wood with them into the town to burn him: and here Fox, undoubtedly, agrees with Knighton, in stating, that his fears compelled him to abjuration. He then removed to the diocese of Hereford. But the sleepless eye of discipline was upon him. His old enemies, the friars, were still about his path: and the consequence was, that, in 1391, he was summoned to answer before the Bishop of Hereford, upon the charge of holding heretical opinions, and of preaching without the license of the

bishop, and in defiance of his injunction. On his appearance, he was allowed further time to prepare his answer, which he accordingly did, in the form of a written protest, and exposition of his doctrines: but it seems that he had the *prudence* to decline any further appearance in person! Sentence was, hereupon, pronounced in due form against him, as a heretic, schismatic, and false informer of the people; and all persons were solemnly admonished, under pain of the law, that they should neither receive, defend, or support him, until he should be reconciled to the church. Against this sentence he appealed to the King in council; and presented, at the same time, what Fox calls "a fruitful letter to the lords and burgesses of parliament." This exhortation, or homily, is little more than a string of scriptural sentences and passages, in condemnation of the manifold obliquities and corruptions of the age. It is somewhat more lengthy than would, probably, suit the patience of our modern Protestant legislature; and it concludes with a profession that, if any thing found therein could be proved contrary to the law of God, he would "revoke his conceit, and be amended by God's law, with which he was ever ready to hold, openly and privily, with God's grace, and nothing to hold, teach, or maintain, that is contrary thereto." Of the fate of "this worthy priest, and true servant of Christ," as he is styled by the martyrologist, no account has been preserved: though Fox conjectures, upon very slight and insufficient grounds, that he was burnt in Smithfield, at the beginning of the next reign.\*

It is a relief to turn from these very equivocal specimens of non-conformity, to the case <sup>William Thorpe</sup> of William Thorpe, whose character and life, as a "poor priest," reflected signal credit on the cause to which he devoted himself. Thorpe was

\* Fox, vol. i. p. 530—542.

destined by his parents for the sacerdotal office: and no expense, within their means, was spared in his preparation for it. Being smitten, however, with certain scruples, he hesitated to take upon himself the sacred responsibility, until he had consulted several wise and virtuous priests, and among them Hereford and Repington, who had not then fallen away from their fidelity: and finding that "their honest and charitable works passed the fame which he heard of them," he resolved to join them in their pious labours. And, not only was he "right homely"\* with these men, "and communed with them long time and oft," but he, also, sought the truth at the lips of their great master himself, John Wiclif, who, he says, was "holden of full many men the greatest clerk that they knew then living, and, withal, a passing *ruylf*† man, and innocent in his living: for which reason, great men communed oft with him, and they so loved his learning, that they wrote it, and busily enforced them to rule themselves thereafter." Being thus captivated with the teaching and the character of Wiclif, (as "most agreeable unto the living and teaching of Christ and his apostles, and most openly showing and declaring how the Church of Christ had been, and yet should be, ruled and governed,") he devoted himself, for more than thirty years, to the work of spreading the precious knowledge he had attained through various parts of England, but more especially in the northern counties. At last the hand of ecclesiastical discipline seized upon him. He was imprisoned in 1407 at Saltwood Castle, in Kent; and, on his examination before Archbishop Arundel, at that place, maintained his cause with modest, but inflexible, constancy. His own account of this examination is still preserved, and is among the most interesting documents in the earlier history of our Reformation.‡ The end of this

\* Familiar.

† Sedate, orderly.

‡ It is printed from Fox, in Wordsw. *Eccel. Biogr.* vol. i. p. 111—212.

Worthy confessor is not known; though it seems most probable that he closed his days in prison.

The part of the examination with which we are more immediately concerned, is that which relates to the duty of preaching. When the archbishop reproached him with holding that he might lawfully preach without authority of any bishop, his reply was, that by the authority of God's law, and also of saints and doctors, he was taught that it was the priest's office to preach *busily*, freely, and truly, the word of God; that no man should take the priesthood upon him without a hearty good-will to preach, or without competent learning for the work; and that he who became a priest, was under the most awful obligation to make known the law of God to his people, *when, where, and to whom* he best might. The archbishop then pressed him with the question of St. Paul, *how should priests preach except they be sent?* and added, that "he never sent Thorpe to preach; for his venomous doctrine was so well known throughout England, that no bishop would grant him a license." On this, Thorpe replied, that he well knew that no license would be granted to him, or any of his brethren, without such terms and conditions as those which were imposed upon the friars, and such other preachers; and to these limitations they could not in conscience submit. "And, therefore," he added, "though we have not your letter, sir, nor letters of any other bishops, written with ink upon parchment, we dare not therefore leave the office of preaching; to which preaching, all priests, after their cunning and power, are bound by divers testimonies of God's law, and great doctors, *without any mention-making of bishops' letters* . . . . . For that God commandeth us to do the office of priesthood, *he will be our sufficient letters and witness*, if we by example of his holy living and teaching, specially occupy us faithfully, to do our office justly: yea, the people to whom we preach, be they faithful or unfaithful, shall



be our letters, that is, our witness-bearers; for the truth, where it is sown, may not be unwitnessed."

It will immediately be perceived that notions like these were well nigh subversive of all ecclesiastical discipline whatever. It can, therefore, hardly be a subject of wonder, or even of blame, that the prelates should be extremely anxious for their suppression. The rack and the stake, indeed, were most execrable instruments for the maintenance of conformity; but these, though of recent introduction into this country, had long been familiar to the spiritual judicatures of the continent; and it could scarcely be expected that the English hierarchy, in that barbarous age, should be more scrupulous in the use of them, than their brother inquisitors abroad, when once the legislature had been prevailed upon to sanction such inhuman extremities. On the other hand, it must never be forgotten, that, if some intrepid spirits had not been found, to burst through the "privilege and custom" of ages, the evils of corrupt and superstitious doctrine might have been eternal: and we might not, at this day, have been living under a system, which combines the blessings of a reformed religious establishment, with those of a liberal and enlightened toleration.

It may be convenient to introduce in this place the mention of several other persons, who, though they cannot properly be numbered among the "poor priests" of Wiclif, were yet, at one time, most strenuous auxiliaries in the cause of reformation, and like some others named above, unhappily abandoned it in time of persecution. Among these, one of the most distinguished was Nicolas Hereford, above alluded to by Thorpe. He was a doctor of divinity, of Queen's College, Oxford, eminent as a scholar and a divine, and for a while, a zealous supporter of the new doctrines. He was, accordingly, summoned to answer at the Preaching Friars, before Archbishop Courtney, was excommu-

nicated for contumacy in not appearing, but afterwards restored, in consideration of his subsequent obedience to the summons, and his abjuration of the erroneous opinions imputed to him.\* It is affirmed by Knighton, that he, subsequently, went to Rome, with a view to defend these same conclusions, and was, eventually, committed to perpetual imprisonment by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Others maintain, that being wearied out with persecution, he finally submitted, and ended his days in the habit of a Carthusian, at the monastery of St. Anne, Coventry. Our own records give a very different account of his fate. By them it appears that, in 1394, the King conferred upon him the Chancellorship of the Church at Hereford; which perfectly agrees with what is said of him in Thorpe's examination; where he is spoken of, together with Purvey and Philip Repingdon, as having renounced all heretical opinions, and accepted preferment in the Church.†

Philip Repingdon, also mentioned <sup>Philip Repingdon.</sup> above, was another of those who were convened at the Preaching Friars. He was one of the Canons, and afterwards Abbot, of Leicester; and had vehemently maintained all the opinions of Wicklif before the University of Oxford. But his fidelity to the work of reformation faded away before the fear of suffering, or the hope of advancement. He shamefully dishonoured the name of his master, not only by abjuring his cause, but by becoming one of its bitterest persecutors. In 1405 his desertion was rewarded by the bishopric of Lincoln, conferred on him by Papal provision; and in 1420, his infamy was crowned with the dignity of a cardinal!‡

The apostasy of these two men, together with that of Purvey, had the disgraceful eminence of furnishing Archbishop Arundel, and his clerks and chaplains,

\* Will. Conc. p. 169.

† For a full account of Hereford, see Lewis, c. x. p. 256—262.

‡ Lewis, c. x. p. 256, 267.

with a powerful engine of attack upon the faithfulness of William Thorpe. It has already been stated, that under their tuition, as well as that of Wiclif himself, Thorpe had been prepared for the office of a travelling preacher : but, when he was examined before the Primate, they had fallen from their steadfastness, and had received *the wages of unrighteousness*. "As touching Philip Rampington,"\* said the archbishop, to that worthy and constant man, "that was first, canon, and after, abbot of Leicester, who is now Bishop of Lincoln, I tell thee, *the day is come, for which he fasted at even*. For neither he holdeth now, nor will hold, the learning that he taught when he was canon of Leicester. For no bishop of this land pursueth now more sharply those that hold the way, than he doth." To which Thorpe replied, "Sir, full many men and women wonder upon him, and hold him for a cursed enemy to the truth." Again,—“For the pity of Christ,”—said several of the archbishop’s clergy, in their expostulations with Thorpe,—“for the pity of Christ, bethink thee, how great clerks,—the Bishop of Lincoln, (Repington,) Hereford, and Purvey,—were, and are ; which have forsaken and revoked all the learning and opinions that those, and such others, hold. Wherefore, since each of them is wiser than thou art, we counsel thee for the best ; that, by the example of these clerks, thou follow them, submitting thee as they do.” And one of them added, that “he heard Nicolas Hereford say, that, since he forsook and revoked the learning and opinions of the Lollards, he had mikle great favour, and more delight to hold against them, than ever he had to hold with them.” The whole reply of Thorpe to these solicitations is signally honourable to his firmness and integrity : but it shows that the *fainting of these standard-bearers* was not without

\* This was a ludicrous distortion of *Repington’s* name, occasioned by the *rampant* violence with which he was known to persecute the Lollards.

its effect upon the courage of the *host*! "Certainly," says Thorpe, "many men and women do mark and abhor the foulness and cowardice of these aforesaid untrue men; how they are overcome, and stopped with benefices, and withdrawn from the truth of God's word, forsaking utterly to suffer therefore bodily persecution. For by this unfaithful doing, and apostasy of them, especially, that are great lettered men, and have acknowledged openly the truth, and have, now, either for pleasure or displeasure of tyrants, taken hire and temporal wages to forsake the truth, and to hold against it, slandering and pursuing them that covet to follow Christ in the way of righteousness,—*many men and women are therefore moved*. But many more, through the grace of God, shall be moved hereby to learn the truth of God, to do thereafter, and to stand boldly thereby."\*

It is somewhat melancholy to reckon, among the deserters from the doctrine of Wiclif, a man so illustrious for learning and munificence as Richard Fleming. Richard Fleming, the founder of Lincoln College, Oxford. After he had proceeded to his master's degree he became notorious, at the University, for his zealous patronage of the reformed opinions, and actually appeared as their defender in the public schools. One would gladly be persuaded that the subsequent counter-revolution in his principles, was the result of honest conviction, and that his integrity did not sink under the weight of his Church preferments. The change of his conduct, whatever may have been the cause of it, was as complete as the most vehement sincerity could have produced. His enmity to the heretical notions was quite as decided as his support of them had ever been. His noble foundation is, itself, a monument at least of the strength of his hostility; for it was expressly designed by him for the education of adversaries to

\* Thorpe's Examination in Wordsw. Eccles. Biogr. ubi supra.

the doctrines of the Reformer. In 1396 he was one of the twelve censors, appointed by the University, for the examination of Wiclif's writings. In 1420 he was promoted to the see of Lincoln; and would, afterwards, have been translated by the Pope to that of York, if the King had not refused his consent. It has already been stated, that it was this Richard Fleming, who, as Bishop of this diocese, was charged with the disinterment of Wiclif's remains, in pursuance of the decree of the Council of Constance; an office which he executed with so much good will, that he caused the bones of the heretic to be burned, and the ashes to be cast into the waters of the Swift. He died in January, 1430, and was buried in his own cathedral.\*

It would be useless to mention several other names, comparatively obscure, which brought similar discredit on the cause of Wiclif. But whatever may <sup>wide disper-</sup> have been the frailty, or the unfaithful- <sup>sion of Wiclif's</sup> ness, of some among his emissaries, it <sup>principles.</sup> must always be remembered, that, when the bitterest hour of persecution arrived, multitudes among his followers were found faithful unto death. With regard to his "poor priests," at least, the *weariness and painfulness* of their exertions is beyond all dispute. By their incessant labours, his principles were so widely dispersed, that, as Knighton affirms, "they were multiplied, like suckers from the root of a tree, and every where filled the compass of the kingdom; insomuch that a man could not meet two people on the road, but one of them was a disciple of Wiclif's." Of this statement Sir Thomas More complains, as a pernicious exaggeration; and yet he himself is compelled to acknowledge the vast increase of the heretics, when seeking for probable grounds of charge against them, as fomenters of rebellion against Henry V.† The character ascribed to them, generally,

\* Lewis, c. x. p. 279, 280.

† Lewis, c. x. p. 218, 219.

by the Popish chronicler, is, as might be expected, much more honourable to their activity, than to their wisdom or their piety. He speaks of them as wordy and disputatious; outtalking all who ventured to contend with them; and exhibiting a wonderful agreement in opinion among themselves. He even charges them with a *Saracenic* pugnacity, abhorrent from the meekness and patience which become the followers of Christ; declaring that "they were rather suspected of being disciples of *Mahomet*, who forbade his followers to argue for his law, but ordered them to defend it with warlike fortitude, and to fight for it." The whole discipline of the Lollards, indeed, according to this writer, was totally different from that of our Saviour: for He said, *if any one will not hear you, when you depart out of that house, or city, shake off the dust of your feet for a testimony against them.* Not so the Wiclifites: their language was,—*If any one will not hear you, or shall say any thing against you, take the sword and strike him, or wound his reputation with a backbiting tongue!*"\* It is somewhat amusing to find this Romish ecclesiastic, ascribing to the Lollards the very maxims which were notoriously in the mouth of the most zealous and ignorant Papiasts. Every one will remember the advice of St. Lewis to all good and unlearned Catholics: "Never argue with a heretic. If any such should presume to assail your faith, make him no other reply but to draw your sword from its scabbard, and to drive it, as far as it will go, into his belly!" That the reformists were often violent, noisy, and pertinacious, and sometimes abundantly lacking in discretion, may very easily be believed. It would have been surprising, indeed, if their proceedings had been uniformly temperate and prudent, in a cause so fitted to call forth the most impetuous energies of

Knigh-ton's re-  
presentation of  
Wiclif's follow-  
ers.

human nature. It must, further, be conceded, that the principles of their great master himself were, some of them, very liable to abuse, and would be often likely to make wild work in the brains of simple and unlettered men. But when we hear them generally accused of maintaining their ground by means of atrocious slander, or sanguinary violence, we have only to recollect, that the same arts which have been used to make the cause of Wiclif odious, were afterwards prodigally employed against that of Martin Luther. The Wicklites had in their possession more powerful resources than those of brawling, or bloodshed. They had the English Bible in their hands, or in their memories. Here lay the grand secret of their strength. Both men and women, as Knighton himself informs us, commenced *teachers of the Gospel in their mother tongue*. In other words, they recited the very Oracles of God to those who could not read, and who were, consequently, unable to consult the Holy Volume for themselves. If this weapon had not been at their command, they would, probably, have been as men that beat the air. They might have fretted out their time upon the stage of the world, "full of sound and fury;" but their counsel would have come to naught!

Another charge, made by the same historian, is, that "the preachers of Wiclif's opinions were usually guarded by their hearers, armed with sword and target for their defence, that no one might attempt any thing against them, or their blasphemous doctrine, or might dare, at any time, to contradict it."\* There is, it must be confessed, something rather *Saracenic* and *Mahometan* in this picture. To our conceptions, the preacher of the Gospel of peace, surrounded by his armed satellites, is a strange and revolting spectacle. But, then, in order to estimate this master rightly, we must carry our thoughts back-

\* Knighton, 2661, 2662. Lewis, c. x. p. 220.

into the fourteenth century. We must "entertain conjecture" of a period, when society was rude and turbulent, and when the omnipresence of the law was not felt as it is now. The preacher of religious novelties would, *at first*, have much opposition to encounter, from the prejudices of a people immersed in superstition; especially when corrupt and interested adversaries were constantly at hand to goad them into fury. The doctrine, might, on the whole, be found palatable enough, when once its qualities were known; but, in many instances, the difficulty would be to obtain a hearing; more particularly, if the preacher, like Swinderby, should begin by a direct and vehement onset upon the favourite vanities and indulgences of the age. In such cases, it might naturally be expected, that an exasperated populace would, occasionally, burst into furious outrage; so that, in the absence of an effective police, the person of the preacher would be left wholly unprotected, if he ventured on his ministrations without a retinue of friends, provided with the means of overawing the multitude. Even in the eighteenth century the lives of Wesley and of Whitfield were sometimes in danger from the passions of the mob. It can, therefore, hardly be surprising, that the followers of Wiclif should have been frequently compelled, between 300 and 400 years earlier, to guard themselves against similar perils. That, when the doctrine began to find favour with the multitude, the martial array might be as effective against the terrors of ecclesiastical discipline, as it had been against those of popular violence, is, it must be allowed, very far from improbable. But here, *again*, it must be kept in mind, that the age was, comparatively, lawless. Besides, there can be no doubt, that the Lollard congregations, were frequently attended by worshipful knights and squires, whose very costume was, in those days, at least partially warlike. So that it would be unreasonable to infer, from such scenes and practices,



that Wiclif was the patriarch of rebellion, or that Lollardism received its main impulse from a spirit of revolutionary violence and disorder.

These remarks, though perhaps somewhat digressive, are rendered necessary by the attempts which have been made to connect the name and the cause of Wiclif, with all the revolutionary symptoms of that period. It has been asserted, for instance, by

The fanatic John Balle, not a disciple of Wiclif.

Varillas and others, that the seditious fanatic John Balle, was a disciple and emissary of Wiclif, or, in other words, one of his *poor priests*. This asseption,

however, is destitute of all reasonable evidence. That the opinions scattered by this fanatic had some resemblance to those of Wiclif and his followers, may certainly be true; but then it is also quite clear, that the resemblance was precisely such as exists between an outrageous caricature and a fair original. That he had any connexion with Wiclif, has never been shown. Nothing can be more certain than the fact, that he had fallen under the censures of Archbishop Langham, as a preacher of manifold and scandalous errors, in the year 1366,\* long before the *poor priests* of Wiclif had been heard of. And Walsingham expressly affirms, that, for upwards of twenty years, previous to the rebellion of the peasantry, he had been busily plying the trade of revolutionary agitation.† By Knighton he is accordingly styled, not the follower, but the forerunner of Wiclif, as John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ. As for the in-

The insurrection of the peasantry, falsely ascribed to Wiclif and his followers.

surrection of the peasantry, Walsingham ascribes it, among various other causes, to the prevalence of religious mendicancy. The professors of poverty, he complains, (forgetful of the principles of the Order, and lusting after the wealth which they had renounced) had shamefully pandered to the bad passions both of

\* Wilk. Conc. iii. 64.

† Wals. p. 292.

high and low; and all with a view to the accumulation of riches. For this purpose "they had called good evil, and evil good, seducing the nobles by their flatteries, the populace by their lies, and leading both classes into pernicious errors." And this surmise is powerfully supported by the confession of the demagogue Jack Straw, immediately previous to his execution. According to his statement, the design of the insurgents was to exterminate all possessioners, bishops, monks, canons, and rectors of churches: and the only ecclesiastics to be spared, were, *not* the emissaries of Wiclif, but the begging friars! These alone would have been suffered to live, as being amply sufficient for all the purposes of religious ministration.\* That the followers of the Reformer were among the instigators of this commotion, is rendered further improbable, by the remarkable circumstance, that his great patron, John of Gaunt, was one chief object of the fury of the insurgents. They not only fired his palace, and destroyed his furniture, but actually sought his life. It is also perfectly notorious, that the Commons, (although they concurred in advising the repeal of the charters of general manumission, extorted from the king by the insurgent villains) ascribed the insurrection wholly to the intolerable burdens laid upon the kingdom, by the prodigality of the court. "To speak the real truth," they say, "the injuries lately done to the poorer commons, *more than they ever suffered before*, caused them to rise and to commit the mischief done in their late riot: and there is still cause to fear greater evils, if sufficient remedy be not timely provided."† It is not,

Attributed by the Commons to the oppression of the people.

\* "Qui in paupertate perseverare juraverant, dicunt bonum malum, et malum bonum, seducendo principes adulationibus, plebem mendaciis, et utrosque secum in devium pertrahentes."—Wals. p. 281. "Soli mendicantes vixissent super terram, qui sufficissent pro sacris celebrandis, et conferendis, universæ terræ."—Wals. p. 283.

† Rot. Parl. 5 Rich. ii. p. 100, cited in Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. ii. p. 53, 94.

indeed, to be supposed that the language of reformation, however reasonable or moderate, would much tend to strengthen the endurance of the people under these oppressions. But this is a very insufficient reason for representing Wiclif and his travelling preachers, as conspirators against the peace and welfare of the realm.

Having, above, considered the various resources derived by the cause of reformation, from the energy of Wiclif himself, and from the activity and zeal of his followers, historical fairness requires that we should survey the external and accidental advantages, which accrued to the same cause, from the influence and patronage of the great.

Encouragement afforded to Wiclif by the great The foregoing narrative has already shown that the aggressions of the Reformer drew down no unfavourable looks from the *high places* of the land, so long as those aggressions were confined to abuses, which brought the ecclesiastical and secular interests into conflict with each other. The amount of encouragement and security thus obtained, will be best estimated from an enumeration of the distinguished persons, who are represented as propitious to the views of the Reformer. At the head of those distinguished persons, it is

Edward III. usual to reckon that illustrious sovereign, Edward the Third; who, for the countenance afforded by him to so pestilent a character, has been consigned, by some historians, to the severest displeasure of heaven. Bodily sickness, mental decline, and an inglorious old age, if we may credit those writers, were the just retribution received by him at the hand of an offended God. That this sovereign formed a worthy estimate of Wiclif's talents and accomplishments there can be no doubt; for he employed him in matters of the deepest national importance, involving his own royal prerogative, and the most vital interests of his kingdom: but he, probably, was quite unconscious that, in so doing,

he had called down the divine wrath upon his head. With the varieties of theological opinion, the monarch did but slightly trouble himself; and in Wiclif he found, what the exigences of his affairs required, not a desperate heresiarch, but an able servant and an enlightened counsellor. It is, however, undeniable, that the confidence of his sovereign must have invested the Reformer with a dignity and an authority, highly favourable to the advancement of his principles and opinions.

It is further indisputable, that Johanna, <sup>Johanna</sup> Queen the widow of the Black Prince, was Dowager. deeply interested for the honour and the personal safety of Wiclif; for, it will be recollected, that it was her peremptory injunction, delivered by her messenger, Sir Lewis Clifford, which arrested the hand of ecclesiastical power, when it was ready to fall upon him, in the synod at Lambeth.

How Wiclif was honoured and sup- <sup>John of Gaunt,</sup> ported by John of Gaunt, must have fully appeared in the course of our narrative. It has been supposed that the monkish historians have testified their sense of the duke's delinquency in this matter, by falsely representing him as little better than a traitorous conspirator. I will not attempt to estimate the force of these imputations. "We cannot hope," as the historian of the middle ages has observed, "to disentangle the intrigues of that remote age, as to which our records are of no service, and the chroniclers are very slightly informed."\* It is more to our present purpose to remark, that the motives of the duke for patronising the cause of reform, were, in all probability, more of a political than a religious complexion. It is true, that he vigorously resisted the attempt which was made in 1390, to deprive the people of their English translation of the Scriptures, declaring, with a mighty oath, that he

\* Lewis, c. x. p. 240.

would maintain their right to read the law of their faith in their own language, "against those, whoever they might be, who brought in the bill:"\* and his protestation was acutely seconded by the arguments of other speakers, who contended, that, if the existing amount of error were to determine the expediency of suppressing translations, the Latin vulgate would, of all others, deserve prohibition, "seeing that the decretals reckoned no fewer than sixty-six Latin heretics."† But then, on the other hand, we have also seen, that when the dispute between Wiclif and the Church became more strictly theological than before, the favour of the duke instantly began to wane. He had set his face like a flint against the more secular tyranny of Rome; but had no inclination whatever to commit himself to a conflict with her spiritual supremacy, relative to mere matters of belief. It cannot, however, be questioned, that whatever may have been his motives, his protection was, on the whole, a tower of strength to the cause of the reformers.

*Anne, the queen of Richard II.* From the character transmitted to us of Anne of Bohemia, the queen of Richard II. it may safely be concluded, that the progress of Scriptural truth was regarded by her with fervid interest. This excellent and amiable lady was the daughter of the emperor Charles IV. and sister to Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia; and her whole life and habits, in this country, were such as gave an honourable and effective sanction to the most important of Wiclif's labours, "The noble Queen of England," says he,‡ "the sister of Cæsar, may hear the Gospel written in three languages, Bohemian, German, and Latin; and to *hereticate* her, on this account, would be Luciferian folly!" There appeared, indeed, but little disposition to *hereticate* her, on the part of the hierarchy. . On the contrary, her scriptural

Hallam, vol. iii. p. 96.

† Lewis, c. x. p. 240.

‡ In his *Threefold Bond of Love*.

studies formed one leading topic of commendation, in the sermon delivered at her funeral, by Archbishop Arundel. "Although she was a stranger," he said, "yet she constantly studied the four Gospels in English, with the expositions of the doctors: and in the study of these, and in the perusal of godly books, she was more diligent than the prelates themselves, although their office and calling required it."\* This may be thought a somewhat strange and hazardous encomium, from the mouth of the Romish primate of all England. But it may easily be imagined, that in his judgment, it was one thing to sanction the use of the Scriptures among persons of education and rank, (especially when guarded by orthodox commentaries,) and another, to throw open the sacred oracles to rash and self-sufficient ignorance. Besides, the prelate would probably have been rather more parsimonious in his praise, could he have foreseen, that certain of her majesty's attendants would, on the death of their mistress, carry back with them the writings and the principles of Wiclif to their native country, Bohemia, and would thus assist to scatter the seeds of reformation, more widely than ever, over the continent of Europe.

With regard to King Richard himself, it would, perhaps, be idle to predicate of him, either attachment or opposition to the views of Wiclif. When he came to the throne, he was merely an "intoxicated boy." As he grew up to manhood, the better elements of his nature were lost and dissipated amidst the gaities of his prodigal court, while its worser qualities developed themselves into a disastrous maturity. Like his ancestor, Edward the Second, he became the slave of worthless favourites; and if any thing like energy remained in his character, it vented itself in eruptions of arrogance and passion; as when he declared to the messengers of

Richard II.

\* Lewis c. x. p. 242.

Parliament that he would not, at their request, remove the meanest scullion from his kitchen. In a character like this, it would be vain to look for any decided views relative to those deep and solemn questions which were connected with the state of the national religion. All that can be said of him is, that in the early period of his reign, he manifested no positive aversion to the person or the principles of Wiclif; and that the persecuting ordinance above alluded to, was rather the work of the hierarchy, than of the king himself. It was not till the year 1395, that the audacity of the Lollards awakened him to a decisive manifestation of his own displeasure at their proceedings.

Among the nobility and gentry of England, both Wiclif and his followers found many zealous and steady friends. It will be remembered that, when he first appeared before the prelates at St. Paul's, he was attended, not only by the Duke of Lancaster, but by Henry Percy, Earl of Derby, and Earl Marshal of England. In one of his homilies, he declares that he had great comfort of certain knights, that they favoured the Gospel, and were disposed to read it in English.\* Of these, several have been mentioned by the chroniclers,† together with dukes and earls, who, "having a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, surrounded the false preachers with a military band, that they might not suffer reproaches or losses by the orthodox, on account of their profane doctrine." But of all the noble persons who rendered the principles of Wiclif honourable, by their own faith and virtue, Lord Cobham, is beyond comparison, the most illustrious. It is probable that he was a hearer of Wiclif himself, in his youth. Most

Various noble-  
men & knights.

Lord Cobham.

\* Lewis, c. x. p. 244.

† The names mentioned by Knighton, are Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir Lewis Clifford, (the same who brought the queen dowager's message to the prelates at Lambeth) Sir John Pecche, Sir Richard Story, or Sturry, Sir Reginald Hilton, and Sir John Trussel.

certainly he was a strenuous and consistent supporter of his opinions, which he intrepidly maintained, not only as a private individual, but in his place as a peer of Parliament. When he was finally brought to answer before the archbishop and clergy, at the house of the Dominican Friars in London, he bore the following testimony to the excellence of his master's doctrine: "As for that virtuous man, Wiclif, whose judgments ye so highly disdain, I shall say here, of my part, both before God and man, that before I knew that despised doctrine of his, I never abstained from sin. But since I learned therein to fear my Lord God, it hath otherwise, I trust, been with me. So much grace could I never find in all your glorious instructions;"—all which provoked the following reply from Dr. Walden, prior of the Carmelites. "It were not well with me, if I had no grace to amend till I heard the devil preach! St. Hierome saith, that he which seeketh such suspected masters, shall not find the mid-day light, but the mid-day devil." The final result of all these proceedings is well known, and needs not to be recited here. This magnanimous and inflexible confessor, abandoned by his sovereign, and hunted down by the fury of his persecutors, was, at last, consigned to martyrdom, and perished in the flames, with the praises of God in his mouth, and the spirit of his Saviour in his heart.\*

\* A full and most interesting account of the fate of this nobleman may be found in Wordsw. Eccl. Biogr. vol. i. p. 217—277; and a spirited abridgement of it, in Southey's Book of the Church, vol. i. p. 358—381. I cannot forbear to call the attention of the reader to Dr. Lingard's narrative of this transaction. It appears that he is sufficiently alive to the horrors of the ancient mode of execution for high treason; for, in one of his notes, he relates distinctly the hanging, embowelling, and heading, of Sir Thomas Blount, in order that the reader may form a vivid notion of the frightful barbarity of that punishment. Vol. iv. p. 381, note. But, when heretics are roasted to death, his sympathies wonderfully subside. In speaking of Sir John Oldcastle, he merely says, "that leader escaped; and, though the king offered the most tempting rewards for his apprehension, eluded, for several years, the pursuit and search of his enemies." And here the account of this nobleman breaks off! Not a syllable do we hear of his being dragged to London, with both his legs broken in the conflict which preceded his seizure, or of his being hanged



It appears, therefore, quite incontestably, that the spirit which Wiclif sent abroad had *brought into captivity*, not only the poor, the weak, and the ignorant, but numbers of high-born and enlightened men. The excellent of the earth were touched by the flame of the altar; and with that sacred fire shut up in their bones, they went forth and did valiantly, in the cause of *truth, of meekness, and of righteousness*. That dangerous and turbulent elements mixed themselves up in the commotions produced by better principles, it would be preposterous to deny. But such, unhappily, are the conditions under which our fallen humanity is often doomed to receive the most inestimable blessings which it may please a gracious Providence to bestow. It becomes us, therefore, to be deeply thankful for the good which has been wonderfully elicited from the conflict, and to labour, with all our faculties, for its preservation.

in chains from a gibbet, and consumed to death by a fire kindled below. The sufferings of a traitor call for generous compassion. Those of a heretic are not even worth mentioning! I say nothing of the historian's representation of Oldcastle's "arrogant and insulting" conduct to his judges, and of the "mild and dignified" demeanour of Archbishop Arundel. This is nothing more than was to be expected, as a matter of course. Those who may be curious for a specimen of Arundel's "mild and dignified demeanour," will do well to consult his examination of William Thorpe; who records many of the "wondrous and blameful" words spoken to him by the primate, "menacing him, and all others of the same sect, to be punished and destroyed to the uttermost."

## CHAPTER XI.

*Proceedings against the Wickliffites—Petition to Parliament on the part of the Lollards—Turbulence of the Lollards—King Richard II. requested to return from Ireland to the succour of the Church—He returns accordingly, and menaces the patrons of Lollardism—Letter of Pope Boniface IX.—Certain positions of Wiclif condemned at Oxford—Statute de Heretico Comburendo—William Sautrè, the first victim of this law—Proceedings of Archbishop Arundel—Continued violence of the Lollards—Law, compelling all persons in civil office to take an oath against Lollardism—Inquisitorial Constitution of Archbishop Chicheley—Effect of these severities—Bishop Pecock writes against the Lollards—He defends the Bishops—"His Repressor"—His "Treatise of Faith"—He censures the preaching of the Mendicants—He maintains the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and questions the prudence of relying on the infallibility of the Church—For these opinions he is forbidden the King's presence, and expelled from the House of Lords—He is convened before the Archbishop for heresy—Abjures—Is imprisoned for life in Thorney Abbey—Persecution of the Lollards renewed under Henry VII.—Martyrdom of Joanna Baughton—Martyrdom of Tylsworth—Bishop Nis—Inhumanity towards those who abjured—These cruelties eventually fatal to the Papacy in England.*

AFTER the death of Wiclif, the mighty waters which he had sent forth to cleanse the land, continued to flow onward, with a stream continually more impetuous and more turbid. Their strength was, unhappily, increased by many a tributary torrent, which fell into their channel, and mingled its impurities with their tide. The dangers which they threatened, from the first, were doubtless formidable—though, probably, much exaggerated by the apprehensions or the indignation of the hierarchy. At last, deep began to call on deep, with a voice so fearful, that the Church called loudly and passionately for the assistance of the State, in arresting the progress of the deluge, and saving the realm at once from pollution and devastation.

1388. The work of embankment against the  
 Proceedings dreaded inundation, was vigorously pro-  
 against the Wic- secuted shortly after Wiclif's removal.  
 Rites.

In 1388, a commission was issued to cer-  
 tain individuals, for the seizure of all the "little  
 books" and tracts of the heresiarch and his auxilia-  
 ries. This commission was fortified with a power to  
 make proclamation, in the king's name, forbidding to  
 all persons, of whatever degree, on pain of imprison-  
 ment and forfeiture, the use of those pernicious writ-  
 ings, or the support of the scandalous opinions which  
 they contained. And in order that these precautions  
 might be co-extensive with the evil, letters-patent, to  
 the same effect, were addressed, at the instance of  
 the primate, to commissioners, throughout most of  
 the counties of England. In spite of these measures,

1394. the indications continued to become more  
 and more formidable; till, in 1394, they  
 were so appalling, that it was thought needful to  
 invoke the personal exercise of the royal authority.

Petition to Par- In that year, a petition was presented to  
 liament on the Parliament on the part of the Lollards,  
 part of the in the form of twelve conclusions, de-  
 Lollards. nouncing the abuses of the Church, and  
 demanding its reformation, in language of greater  
 boldness than had ever before been hazarded in the  
 legislature.\* In addition to this, if we may credit

Turbulence of Walsingham, such was the audacity of  
 the Lollards, that they placarded the  
 gates of St. Paul's Cathedral, and West-  
 minster Abbey, with factious manifestoes, and out-  
 rageous accusations of the clergy.† Richard was, at  
 that time, in Ireland: and so pressing was the dan-  
 ger, that messengers were dispatched to him, with  
 the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London at

\* This petition is printed in Wilkins, by the title of "*Conclusions  
 Lollardorum, in quodam libello correctæ pleno Parlamento Regis An-  
 glie.*" A.D. 1394. 18 Ric. ii. Wilk. Conc. iii. p. 221.

† Wals. p. 368.

their head, to entreat that he would hasten his return, and succour the true faith and the holy Church, which were then assailed with incredible insults and afflictions. Upon this application, his Majesty instantly repaired to England: and finding that certain of the knighthood and nobility of the kingdom were leaders and instigators of these commotions, he summoned several into his presence, and forbade them, with the sternest menaces and rebukes, to continue their favour to the seditious Lollards. Sir Richard Stury was, more especially, the object of the royal indignation. He was compelled to abjure the principles and tenets of these dangerous people; and when he had done this, the king in his turn swore to him, that, if ever he dared to violate his oath, he should perish, without mercy, by an ignominious death.\* The faith of the king, and the zeal of the hierarchy, were further invoked by an urgent epistle from Boniface IX. Letter of Pope Boniface IX. in which he called upon the Church to root out and destroy the maintainers of doctrines, subversive of the State, both civil and ecclesiastical, and exhorted the monarch to strengthen the hands of the clergy with all the aids of the secular authority and power.

By these manifestations of vigour, the work of open agitation was, for a time, suppressed. The vigilance, however, of Archbishop Arundel suffered no relaxation. A provincial council was held by him in 1396, in which eighteen conclusions from Wiclif's *Dialogus* were condemned, and a friar by the name of Wodford was ordered to draw up an answer to them. The University of Oxford was further called upon to examine the writings of the

The King requested to return from Ireland, to the succour of the Church.

He returns accordingly, and menaces the patrons of Lollardism.

1396.  
Certain positions of Wiclif condemned at Oxford.

\* Wals. p. 398, 399.

heretic, and to certify their report thereon in the Chancery. To this injunction, that body opposed the privilege of their exempt jurisdiction; a plea which was speedily beaten down by the Royal Letters Patent, peremptorily forbidding them to rely on any such immunity. They were further threatened with a Visitation from the archbishop, who distinctly charged the whole University with heretical pravity; and thus succeeded in goading them to reluctant action. The result was, that, after some opposition, twelve delegates were dispatched to the Convocation, then sitting at St. Paul's, with a long list of censurable articles, extracted from the writings of the Reformer; but accompanied with a protestation that, with many, their authority was but small, and, accordingly, recommending these articles to the consideration of "his Excellent Paternity," with a view to their being submitted to their most holy Father, the Pope.

*Statute de Heretico Comburendo.*

All this, it will easily be understood, was little better than to follow the scent of heresy with keen nostrils but with muzzled jaws. More promising times, however, were near at hand. The hierarchy grew weary of a conflict against innovation, with blunt and impotent weapons. The reign of a usurper, deeply indebted to their influence for his crown, promised to arm them with much more destructive implements. They accordingly forgot their loyalty in their zeal,\* and hoped

\* "The clergy," says Fuller, "were the first that led this dance of disloyalty. Thomas Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, made a sermon, on Samuel's words, *Vir dominabitur populo*. He showed himself a satirist in the former, a parasite in the latter part of his sermon, a traitor in both. He aggravated the childish weakness of Richard, and his inability to govern, magnifying the parts and perfections of Henry Duke of Lancaster. . . . And thus ambitious clergymen abuse the silver trumpets of the sanctuary, who, reversing them, and putting the wrong end into their mouths, make what was appointed to sound religion, to signify rebellion." Church Hist. p. 153.

In speaking of Henry as a usurper, it is not my meaning to pronounce any judgment upon the deep constitutional question, whether his seizure of the throne was, properly, a usurpation; or whether the change which

that allegiance to the Church might sanctify treason to their sovereign. As a reward for the invaluable services of the clergy in helping him to the throne, Henry IV. consented to light up the flames of religious persecution in the land, and to consign himself to everlasting dishonour, by passing that execrable law for the burning of heretics alive, which was the disgrace of our statute book for two centuries and a half!

It is, perhaps, scarcely too much to say, that by that brutal enactment, which converted kings into the slaves and butchers of the Church, the doom of the Papacy in England was sealed.\* It had a long respite; but, nevertheless, this was its death warrant. The clergy, it may be frankly allowed, had considerable ground for complaint. The abuse heaped upon them by the Lollards was not only furious but *indiscriminate*: and besides, the Reformers would probably have suffered little to remain untouched, if they had been left entirely to their own impulses. Cathedrals, abbeys, and monasteries might have fallen before them: all endowments might have been swept away: and there was no inconsiderable danger lest piety itself should have been rendered almost hateful, by the unsocial austerity which was beginning to furrow the countenance and to cloud the brow of their religion. In addition to this, it can scarcely be

then took place might not more fitly be designated as a Revolution somewhat similar to that of 1688. The point is discussed by Mr. Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 120—124. That some of the parties concerned in these transactions, and especially Henry himself, were more or less, conscious of that sort of irregularity and violence, which popularly, goes by the name of disloyalty and usurpation, will scarcely be questioned: and this is all which is necessary for my purpose.

\* "We find a remarkable petition in 8 Hen. IV., professedly aimed against the Lollards, but intended, as I strongly suspect, in their favour. It condemns persons preaching against the Catholic faith or sacraments, to imprisonment against the next parliament, where they were to abide such judgment as should be rendered *by the king and peers of the realm*. This seems to supersede the burning statute of 2 Hen. IV., and the spiritual cognisance of heresy. Rot. Parl. p. 583. See, too, p. 626. The petition was expressly granted; but the clergy, I suppose, prevented its appearing on the Roll." Hallam, *Middle Ages*, vol. iii. p. 134, note.

denied, that the whole fabric of society was in some hazard from their principles. There is reason to believe, that by many of them the reign of *the saints* upon earth was eagerly anticipated; and that their impatience, if not effectively curbed, might have broken out into wild and fearful commotion. Under these circumstances, if the Church and the State had combined to repress, by vigorous laws, such manifestations of opinion as threatened the peace and stability of the empire, they would have done nothing which could reasonably merit the censures of the most enlightened age. Instead of this, the hierarchy preferred dealing with the innovators rather as heretics, than as traitors or incendiaries; and, not only so, but they fixed upon the most absurd of all the Romish dogmas as the test of heresy. The "murderous question" by which they brought their inquisitions to an issue, was, always, "Do you or do you not believe, that material bread remains in the Sacrament, after the words of consecration have been uttered?" and if the answer was in the affirmative, nothing remained for the delinquent but a death of excruciating anguish. The immediate effect of such proceedings was, that the Lollards were regarded, not as suffering the penalty due to revolutionary opinions and practices, but as martyrs in the cause of Scriptural truth. The more remote consequences were, that a sentiment of abhorrence was gradually imbibed against the clergy, as monsters of inhumanity and injustice. And under the force of these convictions, the Romish establishment sunk, eventually, into the dust.

The first victim of this detestable law was William Sautrè, parish priest of St. Osyth, in the city of London, who may justly be styled the proto-martyr of England. He was charged with eight articles of heresy, one of which related to the sacramental question. With respect to this, he declared that the consecrated

William Sautrè, the first victim of this law.

element was the bread of life, which came down from heaven; but affirmed that it remained very bread, as it was before. Having thus, to use the language of Dr. Lingard, "*refused to give any satisfaction on the subject of the Eucharist,*" he was declared to be convicted as a heretic: and "the unhappy man," says the same writer, "instead of being shut up in an asylum for lunatics, was burnt to death *as a malefactor*, in the presence of an immense multitude." We have here a signal instance of the artifice with which unscrupulous ingenuity can contrive to insinuate falsehood, under the aspect of candour and humanity. Who would not imagine, from a perusal of the above sentence, that the judges were, on this one occasion, forgetful of their ordinary gentleness; and that, by a strain of unusual severity, an unfortunate maniac was punished as a criminal? Who would conjecture, from the words of the historian, that the victim was sacrificed, according to a law dictated by that very Church which pronounced his sentence; and which, at that moment was impatient to pronounce the same sentence on all similar "*malefactors*?"\*

\* It is affirmed by Dr. Lingard, that Sautrè, with unparalleled effrontery, denied his former conviction and *recantation*. This statement is not quite correct. The account of the matter in the Arundel Register, is as follows: Sautrè was first convened before the Bishop of Norwich; and, on that occasion, abjured his opinions, and among them, that which related to the Eucharist. On the 23d of May, 1400, he appeared before the primate, at the Chapter-house of St. Paul's. The whole of the proceedings before the Bishop of Norwich were then read to him; and he was asked whether he was fully aware of the import of those proceedings, and whether he had any thing to object to them? to which he replied in the negative. He was then charged, not only with having maintained that true material bread remains in the sacrament after consecration,—but with having done so subsequently to his abjuration of that, and the rest of his heretical opinions. And here comes the perplexing part of Sautrè's conduct: for, to this last interrogative, he replied, *as if were with a smile, or rather a sneer*, that he was ignorant of the premises; although, *in public*, he affirmed that he had so held and taught, subsequently to the date of the process before the Bishop of Norwich. The words are as follows—"Ad quæ præfatus Willelmus respondit; et quasi *ridendo, sive deridendo*, præmissa negavit, et ignoravit, ut dixit; publicè tamen asseruit quod prædictam (hæresin) tenuit et docuit, post datam dicti processus facti per Episcopum Norwicensem." It would ap-



As this was the first holocaust offered up on the altar of the mass, it was conducted with punctilious solemnity, in order that future inquisitors might be provided with an exact precedent for the regulation of their proceedings. The offender was stripped of all his successive functions, from the order of priest to that of sexton. The cap of a layman was, next, placed upon his head, and he was then consigned, with the usual disgusting and hypocritical recommendation, to the tender mercy of the secular arm. By the secular arm the accursed pile was, accordingly, lighted; and, for the first time in England, the flames of persecution arose towards heaven, to outrage and insult the God of all mercy and consolation!

Proceedings of Archbishop Arundel It would be tedious and unprofitable, to commemorate at length, the incessant activity with which the primate continued to labour for the suppression of Wiclif's writings, for the extirpation of heresy, and for the ruin of the Lollards; or to recite the varied apparatus of canons and constitutions,\* which he framed for these purposes, in the course of the several following years. I therefore pass on to the accession of Henry V.; a period, at which the panic raised by the designs imputed to these people, appears to have reached its height. It is affirmed by Walsingham that the Lollards had fixed placards to the doors of the London churches, proclaiming that a hundred thousand strong arms were in readiness to enforce their opinions; and he adds, that they were instigated to these outrages by Sir John Oldcastle, otherwise Lord Cobham. The history of the transactions in which this nobleman

pear, therefore, that the *premisses* (*præmissa*) which he, most unaccountably, did deny, were,—not his recantation,—but his subsequent perseverance in preaching the doctrine he had renounced. What can possibly have tempted him to this denial, it is extremely difficult to imagine: for, when it was finally demanded of him, why he should not be pronounced a relapsed heretic, he had no cause whatever to allege!

See Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. p. 258.

\* They may be found in Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. See also Lewis, c. vii.

is said to have been implicated, is involved in more perplexity than I can here attempt to unravel. With regard to the account of these matters delivered by the Chronicler himself, it has been justly remarked, that "it is all a series of surmise and rumour, of alarm and anticipation. That any plot was formed, there is no evidence; and the probability is, that artful measures were taken to alarm the mind of the king into anger and cruelty, by charges of treason, and rebellion, and meditated assassination."\* The result, however, was,—that the prisons of London were filled, that nine and thirty persons were suspended by chains from a gallows, and burnt alive by a fire, kindled from beneath,—that Lord Cobham eventually perished in the same manner,—and that a vindictive statute was passed against the Lollards; of which one principal provision was, that all persons employed in civil offices, from the chancellor downward, should take an oath for the destruction of Lollardy.

The preamble to this statute affirms, Law, compelling all persons in civil office to take an oath against Lollardism. that "great rumours, congregations, and insurrections, had been raised in the realm of England, by divers liege subjects of the king, as well by those who belonged to the heretical sect called Lollardie, as by others of their confederacy, excitation, and abetment, with a view to annul and subvert the Christian faith, and the law of God in this kingdom; also to destroy our sovereign lord the king himself, and all manner of estates of this realm, as well spiritual as temporal; and, moreover, all manner of policy, and, finally, all the laws of the land." With every allowance for the exaggerations of malice, of bigotry, and of terror, it is scarcely possible to believe, that imputations so dark could have been *wholly* fictitious or unfounded. At the same time, however, nothing can be more incredible than the assertion, contained

\* Turner's History of England, part iii. c. vii. p. 308.

in this recital, that the object of the supposed conspirators was no less than the dissolution of the whole fabric of society throughout the land. Arundel himself,—whose words these virtually were,—must surely have been conscious that he was putting a gross and cruel falsehood into the mouth of Parliament, for the purpose of heaping infamy and detestation on the cause of Lollardism, and the memory of Wiclif. That the ranks of the reformers may, probably, have been disgraced by the levelling fanaticism of some among its partisans, it would be preposterous to question. But then, on the other hand, it should never be forgotten, that the records of their persecution are wholly silent on the subject of sedition or conspiracy. Religious heresy is the *crime* for which they suffered, not political incendiarism. They were not gibbeted for compassing the king's death, or contriving the destruction of the civil institutions of the kingdom. They were burnt alive for refusing to affirm that there is no material bread remaining in the Eucharist, after certain syllables have been pronounced over it by the priest. Had any among their numbers been duly convicted of treasonable practices, and punished as enemies to their king and country, their adversaries might justly have escaped the curses,—perhaps, they might even have merited the praises,—of posterity. As it is, we are required to believe that all human crimes were involved in the single enormity of questioning the metaphysics of the Church of Rome—a demand which can raise no other feelings than those of disgust and horror against the persecutors.

1416.  
Inquisitorial  
constitution of  
Archbishop Chicheley.

The measure of these iniquities was filled up by the following constitution, made by Archbishop Chicheley, in 1416. It enjoined "all suffragans and archdeacons, with their officials and commissaries, to make inquisition, twice in every year, after persons suspected of heresy. Wherever reputed

heretics were reported to dwell, three or more of the parish were compelled to take an oath that they would certify to the suffragans, or their officers, what persons were heretics, who kept private conventicles, who differed in life and manners from the common conversation of the faithful, who had suspected books in the vulgar tongue, or were conversant with persons suspected of error. On such information, process was to issue against the accused, who were to be delivered over to the secular court, or imprisoned till the next convocation.\* By this accursed ordinance the horrors of the writ for burning heretics were completed. It set up an inquisition in every parish. It sent terror and distrust into every family. Every dwelling was haunted by discord and suspicion: so that a man's bitterest foes were often those of his own household and blood. And the fruits of this flagitious system were, that multitudes were consigned to the dungeon or the stake, by the treachery, or the weakness, of their nearest kindred, or their dearest connexions.†

There can be no doubt that "curses Effect of these not loud but deep," must have been mut- severities. tered, from one end of the realm to the other, against these triumphs of a Church, which maintained her supremacy by the stake and the sword, by massacre and perfidy. But the fires which were trodden down were not extinct. They still lived under the ashes of martyrdom; and at length they broke forth, with might and fury irresistible, the ministers of God's righteous retribution. The successful usurpation of Henry Bolingbroke had been the result of a guilty league between bigotry and ambition: and where were the Bolingbrokes in little more than half a century from that odious compact? Where was the sceptre with which, as with a sword of flame, the faithful witnesses of a good confession had been con-

\* Wilk. Conc. vol. iii. 378.

† Lewis, c. vii. p. 135, 136.

sumed? Where was the throne, whose weight had pressed down, to the very dust, not only the rights of conscience, but the laws of humanity? They were tossed into that heap of ruins, wherewith the downfall of criminal greatness is incessantly loading the earth—a dreadful and ever-growing monument of the vengeance of Him who cannot look upon iniquity. There was rottenness in a dynasty which had incorporated itself with the corruptions of a merciless superstition. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell: and great indeed was the fall thereof! But its fall was, eventually, the rising of the truth, and *the riches of the world*.

That the Church in this century was possessed by the fiercest spirit of intolerance, is manifest from the fact, that its fury was not satisfied with the victims offered in honour of her sacramental mystery. She seized upon one of the most illustrious of her own champions, whose principal error was, that he was too enlightened and candid for the age, and condescended to address the reason of the people, instead of contenting himself with an appeal to their credulity or their fears. The distinguished individual in question was Dr. Reginald Pecock, bishop, first of St. Asaph, and afterwards of Chichester. He has been justly described as a man of rare ability, and still rarer moderation; and, in power and gravity of writing, as, almost, the Hooker of his day. He began his career, indeed, in a direction as orthodox as the hierarchy itself could possibly desire: for he undertook, in a sermon at St. Paul's Cross, the formal vindication of several abuses and delinquencies, which had been loudly arraigned by Wiclif, and which had called forth, both from Catholic and Reformer, an incessant outcry of indignation or of scorn. He ventured to affirm that bishops were, by the very nature of their office,

Bishop Pecock  
writes against  
Lollards.

1447.

He defends the  
bishops.

exempt from the necessity of preaching; that they are under no obligation to strict residence on their sees; and that they may receive their bishoprics by Papal *provision*, and pay first-fruits or *annates* to the Pontiff, without justly incurring the charge of simony. These were desperately unpopular topics; and Dr. Gascoigne\* does not hesitate to ascribe the civil convulsions of those times, in a great measure, to the abandonment of their duties by the prelates of England, and to this unblushing vindication of their neglect by one of their own body. "Since," says he, "Bishop Reginald Pecock, and other bishops advanced by the king, have asserted that bishops are not obliged to preach, themselves, *Almighty God hath preached to some purpose in England*, by actually punishing the bishops, and suffering them to be punished."† It must not, however, be concluded from this vehement censure, that Pecock's apology for his brethren was dictated by his defective sense of the sacred importance of their duties. His defence is grounded on the principle, that bishops are appointed to a higher function than that of inculcating the elements of faith and holiness from the pulpit. If they were exempt from that burden, it was that they might be more able to exercise an effectual superintendence over those who were ordained to bear it, and that they might have leisure for the more perfect and important office of *teaching*; that is, of enforcing religious truth by evidence and argument. Again,—with regard to the absence of bishops from their diocese, he maintained that there were many reasonable causes which may justify their residence elsewhere, and might render it more beneficial to the Church and the realm, than a more constant confinement to the seat of their episcopal office; especially in those days, when the services of churchmen were so often required, as "*the sage people of his majes-*

\* Dict. Theol. Episcopus.

† Lewis's Life of Pecock, p. 19.

ty's council." His defence of Papal provisions, and payment of first-fruits, is entirely grounded on the prodigious absurdity, (then, however, current in the Church,) that the Pope, as universal pastor, is lord of all the benefices in christendom, and that it cannot be simoniacal to render him a part, when the whole is rightfully his own.

The next performance of the bishop His "Repressor" was a work to which he gave the title of *Repressor*, its object being to *repress* the indiscriminate spirit of vituperation which had gone forth against ecclesiastics. In this tract he labours further in vindication of the bishops and clergy; and, in the true spirit of mildness and peace, endeavours to produce such an exposition of the doctrines and practices of the Church, as might reconcile the dissenting Lollards to her communion. This treatise is extremely valuable, not only as a monument of genuine Christian liberality; but as an interesting exhibition of the state of the controversy, in that day, between the establishment and its adversaries. The arguments in favour of various practices, which the reformers derided and condemned, are often enforced with remarkable ingenuity and acuteness. His justification of pilgrimages, and the religious use of images, more especially, is conducted, on the whole, with peculiar felicity and candour. Reliques, he contended, were to be valued only as "rememorative signs"\* of departed saints, the "devout beholding" of which, was approved "by the doom of kindly well-disposed reason." In one respect, however, if we are to judge by his silence, he found this matter rather untract-

\* Pascal, two centuries later, took infinitely higher ground than this. "The Holy Ghost," he says, "reposes, *invisibly*, in the reliques of those who have died in the grace of God, until he appears, *visibly*, in the resurrection. And this is the reason why the reliques of saints are so worthy of veneration. For God never abandons those that are his, not even in the sepulchre; where their bodies, though dead in the sight of men, are alive before God, because sin abides in them no more."—*Pensees*. Never, surely, was so superb a disguise thrown by imaginative piety over absurdity and imposture!

able. In his defence of images, and pilgrimages, and veneration of reliques, he has not a single syllable on the subject of indulgences; the promise of which was, notoriously, the grand motive that attached the populace to these superstitions, and the main object of attack to Wiclif and his followers.

The Repressor, it would appear, notwithstanding the moderation which pervaded the whole work, exposed the bishop to no suspicion, or at least to no open displeasure, from the Church. He was still high in prosperity and honour; and in 1450 was promoted from the see of St. Asaph to that of Chichester. It was not till after his translation that he composed his Treatise of Faith, which proved the source of all his subsequent afflictions; for it was here that the temper of concession and of candour began to manifest itself in a tone which sounded most ominously in the ears of the Papacy. In the first place, he had the boldness to assail, with as little mercy as Wiclif himself, the contemptible style of preaching introduced by the Mendicants, who had substituted fable and romance for the eternal truth of the Gospel, and "split the ears" of their staring congregations with vociferous encomiums of their saints. Pecock was far too learned and enlightened to tolerate these pernicious extravagances. In his honest zeal, he arraigned the Friars of heresy and superstition; and, by way of embodying his censure in a single phrase, he ventured to give them the ridiculous title of *pulpit-bawlers*. This, however, might, possibly, have been endured; for the intrusive arrogance of the Mendicant orders had long been hateful to multitudes, both of the secular and monastic clergy. But, not content with this, Pecock, in an evil hour for his peace, though, perhaps, a bright one for his fame, placed himself between the main pillars, that supported the fabric of the Papacy, and shook them. He maintained, first, that the Holy Scriptures are the sub-



Maintains the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and questions the prudence of urging the infallibility of the Church.

stantial foundation of our faith, the only rule or standard of revealed or supernatural truth: and, secondly, that it is a vain and hopeless thing to attempt the reduction of the Lollards by means of a principle so questionable as the infallibility of the priesthood. Upon this, as

might be expected, certain of the high-priests began to rend their clothes, and to cry out blasphemy!

It is a very remarkable circumstance that the temporal lords joined heartily in the persecution which now commenced against Pecock, if they did not actually begin it. The reasons for this may, probably, have been, that he had lost his patron the Duke of Suffolk, by whom he is said to have been promoted to the see of Chichester, and

that several of his doctrines were extremely unpopular among the laity,—more especially the position, that the Pope was master of all the benefices in christendom. But, whatever may have been the cause, in 1457 he was expelled the House of Lords, and forbidden the King's presence; and so bitter was the exasperation against him, that the peers refused to proceed with any business, so long as Pecock continued in the House. At last, he was

Convened before the archbishop for heresy.

brought before the primate, on a charge of heresy, combined with other accusations, framed to all appearance with a view to deprive him of all sympathy from the people. On these charges he was convicted, and the only choice left him, was that of abjuration or the stake. By this tremendous alternative the fortitude of the bishop was overpowered. He replied that "it would be better for him to become the gazing-stock of the people, than to desert the law of faith, and to be sent after his death into hell fire. He, therefore, made it his desire to abjure, and

Abjures.

so to frame his life in future as to give no cause for

suspicion or reproach." By his biographer\* this answer is stigmatized as weak and abject; but "there is more," as Fuller observes, "required to make a valiant man than to call another a coward." It should, moreover, in all righteousness and charity, be remembered, that Pecock never professed any renunciation of his fidelity to the Romish Church. For twenty years he had been her faithful, strenuous, though too candid and honourable, champion. It may, therefore, be reasonably presumed that he sincerely dreaded the very thought of rebelliously opposing his judgment to hers; and that his conduct, on this trying occasion, was prompted by motives similar to those which impelled Fenelon to read publicly, in his own cathedral, the condemnation of his own opinions.

His abjuration was performed under every circumstance of humiliation, which could make it bitter, almost beyond the bitterness of death. He was brought to St. Paul's Cross, in his stole, or episcopal habit, and placed at the archbishop's feet. His books were delivered by his own hand to the officer appointed to cast them into the flames. In the presence of 20,000 people he then read his abjuration, wherein he confessed himself a miserable sinner, who had before walked in darkness, but was now, by God's mercy, brought back to the right way; and he exhorted all men, in the name and virtue of Almighty God, to give no faith or credence to his pernicious doctrines. The cup of his affliction, however, was not yet drained. He had still to endure the venomous contumely of his enemies, and to taste the parental mercies of the Church he had defended. She did not, indeed, burn him alive; but it may, almost literally, be said that she buried him alive; for, <sup>Is imprisoned</sup> after stripping him of his bishopric she <sup>for life in Thor-</sup> consigned him to the most rigorous im- <sup>ney Abbey.</sup> prisonment, for life, within the walls of a monastery,

\* Lewis, p. 158,

He was sent to Thorney Abbey in Cambridgeshire; and confined there to a single chamber, which he was on no account to leave. All converse with him was strictly forbidden. He was debarred from the use of pen or ink, or paper, or even of books, with the exception of a mass-book, a Psalter, a legend, and a Bible. And his diet, for the first quarter of his imprisonment, was to be the same with the daily allowance of the convent; afterwards that of a sick or aged brother, with such further indulgence as his health and years might require. How long the bishop survived under this cruel captivity is unknown. It is probable that his miseries were shortly terminated: though various accounts are given of his death.

Such was the end of this eminent churchman, undoubtedly among the most\* learned of his age and country. His spirit was far too equitable and moderate for the period in which he lived. As an instance of this, he, like the heresiarch, whose doctrines he combated, ventured to address his countrymen in their own language, on questions involving the salvation of their souls; a practice which was thought to draw aside the curtains of mystery, and to invite the vulgar gaze to the secrets of the chamber within. He fell into another egregious controversial solecism. Instead of assailing the Lollards with asperity and menace, he treated the accursed separatists with gentleness and patience,—he heard their scruples and objections with paternal mildness,—nay, he even thought that heretics might lawfully be argued with, before they were finally delivered over to the secular arm, as incorrigibly obstinate. This, of itself, was a practical heresy, of the darkest complexion, in the eyes of a priesthood, who would hear of nothing but implicit faith. In short, he inadvertently dashed

\* His learning, however, like most of the learning of his time, comprehended but little Greek. He confounds Cephias with κεφαλη, and translates it *head*: and he derives orthodoxy from ορθος, *right*, and δόξα, *glory*! The Life of Bishop P., by Mr. Lewis, is a very interesting and instructive volume.

his head against that bulwark of adamant, which had been raised to make the Papal fortress impregnable—the infallibility of the Church: a doctrine of which, in that age, it might be truly said, that he who fell upon it should be shattered, and he on whom it fell should be crushed to dust. His fate was a dreadful warning to the inquisitive world! If Bishop Pecock, the illustrious defender of the Church, was to be intombed in a dungeon, what was to be expected by those who assailed her doctrines, and execrated her tyranny and corruption?

It is a very memorable circumstance in the story of this extraordinary man, that his life was passed in a conflict with the errors of Wiclif, and yet that, after his death, his name was solemnly coupled with the name of the Reformer, and, in that company was, in due form, consigned to immortality. The foundation of King's College, Cambridge, took place about fourteen years before Pecock's conviction and imprisonment: and such was the zeal and orthodoxy of his Majesty, or his advisers, that a clause was added to the statutes of the society, providing, that every scholar, on the expiration of his probationary years, should take an oath, that he would not favour the condemned opinions or heresies of *John Wiclif, Reginald Pecock*, or any other heretic, so long as he should live, on pain of perjury and expulsion, *ipso facto*.\* And it is still more curious that, in spite of this royal enactment, King's College turned out to be one of the most heretical societies in the University!

The whole period of intestine commotion, and more especially the reign of Edward IV. furnish, as Fuller remarks, but scanty materials for *Church story*. "The sound of bells in the steeples was

\* *Item, statuimus, ordinamus, et volumus, quod quilibet Scholaris, in admissione sua in Collegium nostrum Regale predictum post annos probationis, juret quod non favebit opinionibus damnatis, erroribus, aut heresibus, Johannis Wiclif, Reginaldi Pecock, neque alicujus alterius heretici, quamdiu vixerit in hoc mundo, sub pena perjurii, et expulsionis ipso facto.* Lewis's Pecock, p. 173.

drowned with the noise of drums and trumpets. And yet this good was done by the civil wars, that they diverted the prelates from troubling the Lollards; so that this very storm was a shelter to those poor souls, and the heat of these intestine enmities cooled the

Persecution of  
the Lollards re-  
newed under  
Henry VII.

persecution against them." On the accession of Henry VII. however, the flame burst forth once more. The merciless spirit of the house of Lancaster seemed to revive in the person of him who was to unite the conflicting claims of the two adverse families, and whom all parties were disposed to hail as the minister of peace and reconciliation. "Observable was the carriage of this prince—(I, again, am citing the words of Fuller)—towards the Pope, the clergy, and the poor Lollards. To the Pope he was submissive, not servile, his devotion being seldom without design; so using his Holiness, that he seldom stooped down to him in any low reverence, but with the same gesture, he took up something in order to his own ends. To the clergy, of desert, he was very respectful, trusting and employing them in State affairs more than his nobility. To the dissolute and vicious clergy he was justly severe, and pared their privileges, ordaining that clerks convict should be burnt in the hand; both that they might taste a corporeal punishment, and carry a brand of infamy. . . . . To the Lollards (so were God's people nicknamed) *he was more cruel than his predecessors.*" One revolting instance of his wanton inhumanity is related by Fox. There was, at Canterbury, an aged priest, so firmly rooted in the heresies of Wiclif, that all the clerks and doctors of the place were unable to remove, or even to shake him. The obstinacy of this confessor reached the ears of the King, who felt impelled to undertake the adventure of reclaiming him, though "we never read before," says Fuller, "of his Majesty's *disputing*, save when he *disputed* Bosworth Field with King Richard the Third." A

royal polemic is proverbially irresistible. The Christian divine, like the philosopher of old, was unable to withstand the master of legions, and surrendered his opinions to the force of imperial logic. The conqueror, however, made a most detestable use of his victory. The unhappy convert was burnt immediately on his abjuration, and derived no other advantage from his encounter with the king, than the benefit of perishing in communion with the Catholic Church.

The martyrdom of an aged woman, Martyrdom of named Joanna Baughton, has left another blot upon the reign of this cold-  
Joanna Baughton.

blooded monarch. She was upwards of fourscore when she was called to suffer, for her faithful adherence to the opinions of the Reformer, whom she honoured as an eminent saint. Her venerable years afforded no protection against the remorseless bigotry of the age. She was informed, that the stake would be the certain recompense of her perseverance in misbelief. But the terrors of the threat were, in her judgment, not *worthy to be compared* to the comfort she experienced in the love of God, and the protection of his holy angels. She rendered her soul, in the midst of the flames, with admirable constancy; and her ashes were collected as precious memorials of her martyrdom. But the measure of atrocity remained yet to be filled up. At Amersworth, a heretic, named Tylsworth, was consigned to the flames: Martyrdom of and, with a refinement in barbarity, Tylsworth.

which might excite the envy of a North-American savage, his only daughter, who had also fallen under suspicion, was compelled to kindle the pile, that was to consume her own father by an agonizing death. One monster there was, in those days, who disgraced the priesthood, by adding coarse and vulgar insult to brutal inhumanity. Bishop Nix, of Norwich, Bishop Nix. immortally infamous for his alacrity in persecution, when he spoke of persons supposed to carry about with them the taint of heresy,

described them as men who savoured of the *frying-pan*. The extent of havoc, inflicted by this awful infatuation of the clergy, and the sovereign, may be tolerably estimated, even from the somewhat sportive hyperbole of a correspondent of Erasmus, who declares, that the frequency of executions at Smithfield had advanced the price of firewood in the neighbourhood of London. That the *earthly and devilish wisdom* of the sovereign, and the hierarchy, could have made a single sincere convert, is utterly incredible. That it gradually alienated the heart of England, is most certain. It is true, that the multitude of dreadful examples was often too much for the weakness of flesh and blood. From many a sincere believer in the reforming doctrines, the words of abjuration were extorted by the terrors of the fire; and these appearances of success may have strengthened the Church in her system of butchery. Repentance itself, however, had no power to mitigate her spirit; and *cruel*, indeed, were her *tender mercies* towards the wretched victims of infirmity and fear. They were spared the death of martyrs, only that they might linger out a life of martyrdom. With a faggot on their shoulder, they were compelled to witness the dying agonies of their more intrepid brethren. With the likeness of a faggot, wrought or painted on their sleeve, and with the mark of heresy branded on their cheek, they were sent forth to public scorn, and almost to utter excommunication. They who wore this badge of infamy, were nearly sure to perish for want of employment and support; they who, for an hour, dared to lay it aside, were as certainly consigned to the flames. And the horrible fate which thus awaited them, passed into a proverb—*Put it off and be burnt, keep it on and be starved*. But the soul sickens at the recital of these enormities. It finds no relief but in the recollection, that the Church which perpetrated them was but heaping up to herself wrath against the day of wrath,

The hour of vengeance was in the heart of God. It was drawing nigh, with a noiseless and stealthy pace. "Retribution," it is said, "has a foot of velvet, but a hand of steel." In the midst of the cry of persecution, the approach of ruin was unheard, and unsuspected. But the arm was, even then, all but uplifted, which was to smite the scalp of this gigantic and godless oppression. The trumpet was, even then, at the mouth of the angel; and the blast was about to go forth, which, in this land, at least, was to level its battlements in the dust.

These cruelties eventually fatal to the Papacy in England.



## CHAPTER XII.

## THE WRITINGS OF WICLIF.

It has already appeared, from the preceding narrative, that no efforts were spared, by the adversaries of Wiclif's doctrine, for the suppression of the works in which it was conveyed to the public. Their vigilance and activity, however, were most signally baffled. In spite of this posthumous persecution, the Reformer, though dead, still continued to speak; and it has been calculated, that full three-fourths of his writings survive, at this day, to proclaim the vanity of all forcible resistance to the progress of Truth. Of those compositions of Wiclif which have perished, by far the greater part consists of scholastic treatises, the loss of which may be endured without any immoderate regret. That portion which remains may be contemplated as the furniture of a vast and ancient armory, hung round with the weapons of a warfare, the final issue of which is felt, to this hour, throughout the civil and religious institutions of our country. The collection may, properly, be divided into two main compartments: first, those works of Wiclif's which have appeared in print; secondly, those which still remain in manuscript. To these may be added, such of his writings as are not now to be found in this country,—the titles of certain others of which nothing but their names is, at present, known,—and, lastly, a notice of some treatises, which have been improperly ascribed to Wiclif. This, accordingly, is the arrangement adopted in the following catalogue.\*

\* It has been already stated, in the Preface, that for the power of presenting this catalogue to the public, I am indebted to the liberality of Mr. Vaughan, and of his publishers.

## SECTION I.

## HIS PRINTED WORKS.

1. *Translation of the New Testament*, printed first by the Rev. John Lewis, Minister of Margate, in the county of Kent, in the year 1731; and again in the year 1810, by the Rev. Henry Hervey Baber, Assistant Librarian of the British Museum. The last editor remarks, that "the text of Mr. Lewis's edition was taken from two manuscripts, one of which was his own, and the other the property of Sir Edward Dering, Bart. of Surrenden-dering, in Kent. From the former, he transcribed for the press the Four Gospels; from the latter, the Epistles, the Dedes of Apostles, and the Apocalips. The transcript was collated by the learned Dr. Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalen College, Cambridge, with ten manuscripts deposited in different Libraries at Cambridge; and afterwards compared by Mr. Lewis, with specimens purposely selected of six of the most curious manuscripts in the University of Oxford." Of that edition Mr. Baber's is a reprint.

2. *Triologus*. This work was printed in 1525, with the following title: Jo. Wiclefi viri undique piissimi, dialogorum libri quatuor; quorum primus divinitatem et ideas tractat: secundus universarum creationem complectitur: tertius de virtutibus vitiosis contrariis copiosissime loquitur: quartus Romanæ Ecclesiæ sacramenta, ejus pestiferam dotationem, Antichristi regnum, fratrum fraudulentam originem atque eorum hypocrisim, varique nostro ævo scitu dignissima, graphice perstringit, quæ ut essent inventu facilia, singulorum librorum tum caput, tum capituli summam indice pernotavimus. M.D.XXV. 4to. The volume is without the name of the printer or place. It is said to have been printed by Oporin, at Basil; and on other grounds, it has been attributed to Valentia Kob. See Baber's *Memoirs of Wiclif*, p. 50. There are copies of this work in the Libraries of Trinity College, Cambridge, the Cathedral at York, and Lambeth Palace. They are also to be found, though very rarely, in private collections.

The following statement of the contents of the several chapters of the *Triologus*, will further assist the reader in judging of that work.

## LIBRI PRIMI.

Deus sit omnium rerum prima causa. Deus est supra omne genus. De triplici suppositione. Quomodo Deus est quicquid melius est esse quam non esse. De passionibus et proprietatibus Dei. Quod Deus sit trinus. De naturali demonstratione Trinitatis. De ideis. De inventore idearum, et quæ res habent ideas. De intelligentia Dei. De limitibus idearum.

## LIBRI SECONDI.

De universitate creatæ. De triplici mensura eternitatis. De compositione rerum et creatione. De materiæ primæ quidditate et ejus pluralitate. De anima intellectiva et suis potentiis. De anatomia cerebri et suis humeribus. De sensationibus. Si immortalis spiritus ratione

deduci possit. De potentiis intellectus hominis. De angelis. De diversorum angelorum diverso iudicio. De angelorum lapsu, et eorum poena. De pugna angelorum. De predestinatione et praescientia Dei, et eorum causis. De celo et suis partibus.

## LIBRI TERTII.

De virtutibus. Quot virtutes sunt in intellectu et voluntate. De spe. De peccato. Quomodo peccatum veniale et mortale distinguuntur. Penes quid attentatur peccati gravitas. De gratia. Omnia eveniunt necessitate absoluta. De septem peccatis mortalibus. De superbia. De humilitate. De invidia. De charitate. De ira. De patientia et mititate. De accidia, quae medium tenet inter septem peccata mortalia. De virtute accidis opposita. De avaritia. De virtute opposita avaritiae. De gula. De virtute opposita gula. De luxuria. De castitate. De proutate ad peccandum. De incarnatione et morte Christi. De originali peccato. De incarnatione, quomodo Deus potuit incarnari. De numero salvandorum. Quomodo Christus excedit ordines Angelorum, et hominum. Quomodo nullus sanctorum est laudandus, nisi quia Christum est imitatus. Quomodo lex Christi in infinitum excedit alias leges.

## LIBRI QUARTI.

De signis. De eucharistia. Quid demonstretur per haec. Quod post consecrationem manet panis. Probantur jam dicta superius rationibus. Quomodo et qua causa inolevit haeresis circa eucharistiae sacramentum. Quomodo panis est corpus Domini, non existens identice corpus ipsum. De identificatione panis cum corpore Christi. Quid corpus Christi non putrefcit. Si duo corpora possunt esse in eodem loco. De baptismo. De triplici baptismo. De poenis infantum sine peccato actuali decedentium. De confirmatione. De sacramento ordinis. Hujus sacramenti confirmatio. De avaritia cleri. Seculares propter dotationem sunt puniendi. De matrimonio. Quid sit matrimonium. De causa libelli repudii. Cum quibus verbis vel signis matrimonium celebrari debet. De poenitentia. In quo signo possumus capere veram contritionem. De extrema unctione. De speciebus ministrorum. Quod fratres comminiscuntur haeresim in ecclesia. De mendicatione fratrum. Quod mendicatio fratrum est infundabilis in scriptura. De literis fraternitatum. Quomodo fratres vendunt sua merita et orationes. De indulgentiis. Quomodo ordines fratrum sunt introducti. In quo fratres legi Christi contrarii. De variis fratrum abusibus. Quomodo fratres seducunt regna quae incolunt. De fratrum fraude atque malicia. An domini temporales debent et possunt populares inuare et defendere contra fratres. De statu hominis qui consequitur post hanc vitam. De ultimo iudicio, quare, et ubi, et quando erit. De dotibus corporum beatorum. De dotibus animas. De poenis damnatorum. De sensibus bonorum interioribus et exterioribus.

3. *Ostium Wickliffe: or, Wickliffe's Wicket.* This piece has been several times printed. "The first edition," observes Mr. Baber, "was printed at Noremberch, in 1546, 8vo.; of the second edition, I know no more than what the third informs me in its title which is as follows: 'Wickliffe's Wicket, faythfully overseene and corrected after the original and first copie. The lack whereof was cause of innumerable and sham-

full erroures in the other edicion. As shall easily appear to them that lyste to conferre the one with the other. Overseene by M. C.' It is a 16mo. without date, place, or printer's name; and the language of it is accommodated to that of the time in which the book was printed. The last edition appeared in 1612, printed at Oxford, in 8vo. and was edited by the learned Henry Jackson, of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A copy of the first edition of this very rare book is in the Bodleian Library; of the third, in Lambeth Palace Library; and of the last, in the British Museum."

4. *Ad Regem et Parliamentum*. A Latin copy of this tract is among the Cotton MSS. in the British Museum; a copy in English is preserved in Benet College, Cambridge; and another in Trinity College, Dublin. It was published by Dr. James, and printed at Oxford, 1608, quarto.

5. *Objections to Freres*. This piece was published by Dr. James in the same volume with the treatise last noticed, entitled, "Against the Orders of the Begging Friars." The volume is scarce, but may be seen in the British Museum, and in the Bodleian Library.

6. *Determinatio de Dominio*. E. Codd. MSS. Joh. Selden, Arch. B. 10. This paper is printed in Mr. Lewis's collection, No. 30.

7. *Ad quæsitâ Regis et Concilii*. "Dubium est utrum regnum Angliæ possit legitime imminente necessitate suæ defencionis thesaurum regni detinere ne deferatur ad externos etiam Domino Papa sub ponâ censurarum et virtute obedientiæ hoc petente." In Hyperoo Bodl. 163. This paper may be seen in Fox i. 584.

8. *Conclusiones suæ cum responsione sua*. This document is printed in Walsingham, Hist. 206—208. *Ad Parliamentum Regis* is another reply to the same conclusions, and is printed in Lewis's Life of Wycliffe. This tract is noticed as Wycliffe's, by Lord Chief Justice Coke, in the fifth volume of his reports. These papers are in the Selden MSS. (Arch. B. 10.) and also a third, relating to the same series of Articles.

9. *Confessio de Eucharistiâ*. This is printed by Mr. Lewis, No. 21.

10. *De fide Eucharistiæ*. "Credo ut Christus et Apostoli docuerunt."

11. *Excusationes ad Urbanum*. "Gaudeo plane detegere cuique fidem." An English copy of this letter is in the Cotton Library.

12. *Pro egentibus Presbyteris*. *Sunt causa quæ urgeant pauperiores*, or, "Why poor priests have no benefices." This tract is in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, and in C. C. C. Cambridge. It was first printed by Mr. Lewis.

## SECTION II.

*Including the Wickliff manuscripts extant in England and Ireland. This series contains nearly forty MSS. preserved in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin, the existence of which has been hitherto unknown to the Reformer's biographers.*

1. *De ultima Ætate Ecclesiæ*. Trinity College, Dublin, Class C. Tab. No. 12.

2. *Expositio Decalogi*. This exposition is in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus D. xix. In the Bodleian is a more extended Exposition

of the Decalogue in Latin. It was minutely consulted by Dr. James, in composing his Apology for John Wiclif.

3. *The Pore Caitif*, sometimes called *Pauper Rusticus*; sometimes *Confessio derelicti Pauperis*, consists of a series of tracts in English, designed for the instruction of the poorer classes of the people in the elements of the Christian religion. It is described by its author as "sufficient to teach simple men and women, of good will, the right way to heaven." The comments on the *Apostles' creed*, and the *pater-noster*, are followed by pieces with the following titles. *Sweet sentences, exciting men and women to heavenly desire. Virtuous patience. Of temptation. The charter of heaven. Of ghostly battle. The name Jesus. The love of Jesu. The desire of Jesu. Of very meekness. The effect of man's will. Active and contemplative life. The mirror of maidens.* At the conclusion of the last piece in this collection are the words, "Here endeth this book that is clepid the Pore Caitif." Copies of this work are in the British Museum, Lambeth Library, and Trinity College, Dublin.

4. *De Veritate Scripturae*. Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3021. 32. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class. C. Tab. 1. No. 24.

5. *De Hypocritarum Imposturis*. This tract is in English, beginning—"Crist commandith to his disciplis, and to alle Christen men to understonde and flee the sour dow of Pharisees which is ypocrisy." C. C. C. Cambridge. Trin. Coll. Dub. The following pieces also, to No. 19, are in the same collections.

6. *De Obedientiâ Prælatorum*. It begins, "Prelates slandren poor priests and other Cristen men, that they will not obesthe to their Sovereigna," &c. &c.

7. *De Clericis Possessionariis*, which begins, "Clerkes Possessioners fordon priesthood, knighthood, and commoners."

8. *Impedimenta Evangelizantium*. This is the same with the piece described as, "Of Feigned Contemplatif Life," which thus begins—"First, when true men teach by God's law, wit, and reason, that eche Priest oweth to do his wit, and his will, to preche Christ's Gospel," &c. &c.

9. *Pro amplexando Evangelio*. The English title of this piece is, "How religious men should kepe certain Articles;" beginning thus—"Christen men, preyen meekly and devoutly to Almighty God, that he grant his grace for his endless mercy to our religious, both possessioners and medicants," &c. &c. The articles are numerous, but the notices connected with them are very brief.

10. *How Satanas and his Priests, and his feyned Religions, casten by three cursed Heresies to destroy all good living and meyn-tening all manner of Sin*. It begins thus,—"As Almighty God in Trinity ordeineth men to come to the bliss of heaven by three grounds," &c. &c.

11. *De Nequitiiis ejusdem*. This piece, in English, has a title beginning with the words—"How Anti-Christ and his Clerks travellen to destroy holy Writ, and to make Christen Men unstable in the faith," &c. &c.

12. *Super Testamento Francisci*. Wiclif's remarks on this Testament begin thus—"But here the Menours sayn that the Pope dischargeth them of this testament." The comment is preceded by a translation of the rule of St. Francis, as given by Matthew Paris.

13. *For Three Skille Lords shulden constrain Clerks to live in meekness, wilfull poverty, and discreet penance and ghostly travaille*. It begins thus—"Open teaching of God's law, old and new, open ensample of Christ's life, and his glorious Apostles," &c. &c.

14. *De Prelatis, et eorum Officio*. This is the piece so frequently cited as "Of Prelates;" beginning thus—"Here it telleth of Prelates, that Prelates leaven preching of the Gospel, and ben gostly manquellers of men's souls."

15. *Speculum de Antichristo*. The English copy of this tract professes to describe "How Antichrist and his Clerks seren true Priests fro preching of Christ's Gospel by four Deceits." It commences thus—"First, they seyn that preching of the Gospel maketh dissension and enmity."

16. *De Clericorum Ordinatione*. The copy of this preserved is also in English, entitled, "Of the Order of Priesthood;" beginning—"For the order of priesthood is ordained of God, both in the old law, and in the new."

17. *De Dominis et Servis*. *Servi primum juste ac libenter, or, "Of servants and Lords, how eche shull kepe his Degree;"* beginning—"First, servants shullen truly and gladly serve to their lords or masters."

18. *How Prayer of good Men helpeth much, and Prayer of sinfull Men displeaseth God, and harmeth themselves and other Men;* beginning—"Our Lord Jesu Christ techeth us to pray evermore for all nedeful things both to body and soul."

19. *De Episcoporum Erroribus;* beginning—"There bin eight things by which simple Christen men ben deceyed." Also, "*De xxxiii erroribus curatorum;*" beginning—"For the office of curates is ordained of God."

20. *How Satanas and his Children turnen works of mercy upon Sodom, and deceyven men therein;* beginning—"First, Christ commandeth men of power to feed hungry poor men; the fend and his techen to make costly feasts, and waste many goods on lords," C. C. C. Cambridge.

21. *A short Rule of Life for eche Man in general, and for Priests, and Lords, and Labourers in special;* beginning—"First when thou risest, or fully wakest, think on the goodness of thy God, how for his own goodness, and none other nede, he made all things of nought," C. C. C. Cambridge. This piece is followed by a brief comment on the *Ave Maria*.

22. *Of Wedded Men and Wives;* beginning—"Our Lord God Almighty speaketh in his law of twele matrimonies or wedlocks," &c. &c. C. C. C. Cambridge.

23. *Of good preching Priests;* beginning—"The first general point of poor priests that prechen in England, is this," &c. &c. C. C. C. Cambridge.

24. *The great Sentence of the Curse Expounded;* beginning—"First, all heretics against the faith of holy writ, ben cursed solemnly, four times in the year." C. C. C. Cambridge.

25. *De Blasphemia contra Fratres;* beginning—"It is seide that three things stourblin this realme, and specially heresie." Bibl. Bodl. Archio. A. 83.

26. *De Dominio Divino*, is a tract of four pages; beginning—"Sith false glossiris maken Goddis law derk, and letten secular men to susteyne, and kepe it, of sich false glossis schulde each man bewar."

27. *Super Oratione Dominica;* beginning—"When we seyn our Fader that art in heaven, we ben taught."

28. *Ad ducem Glocestria contra Fraterculum;* beginning—"Most worshipful and gentlest Lord Duke of Gloucester." Trin. Coll. Dub.

29. *De Sathana astu contra Fidem;* beginning—"The fend seek-

eth many ways to mar men in belief." This tract extends to two pages only.

30. *Sermones in Epistolas*, and *Sermones in Evangelia*, are the titles of his homilies, or parochial discourses. Copies of these, more or less perfect, and some of them beautifully written, are in the manuscript collections of the British Museum, Cambridge, Trinity College, Dublin, and elsewhere.

31. *Translatus in Anglicum sermonem Biblir tota, &c.* Of this memorable work, several copies are extant; as in the British Museum and Lambeth Palace. The costs of transcribing obliged our ancestors to secure parts of the sacred volume; sometimes including the four gospels, sometimes the epistles of St. Paul, and not unfrequently, still smaller portions. Dr. Whitaker states (*Hist. of Richmondshire*, Art. Wiclif,) that the copy of Wiclif's Bible, in Lambeth Palace, is beautifully illuminated; and suggests that the portrait of Sir Antonio More was probably obtained from such a source. But there is not, nor has there ever been, a manuscript at all of that description in the Lambeth Library.

32. *Translatio Clementis Lanthoniensis.* "In the Earl of Oxford's Library," observes Mr. Lewis, "is a MS. entitled, John Wiclif's Translation of Clement Lanthon's Harmony of the Gospels, which begins thus—'Clement, a Preet of the Chirche of Lanthonth,' in 12 parts. Lanthon was an Austin Friar, who flourished in 1164. Leland de Scrip. Brit. 226. There is a copy of this work in the British Museum, Harl. MSS. 1862.

33. *De Stipendiis Ministrorum.* This tract is extant in English, entitled, "How men shulden find Priests," and beginning—"Think wisely, ye men that finden priestes, that ye don this alms for God's love, and help of your soules, and help of Christen men." C. C. C. Cambridge.

34. *De Ecclesia Dominio;* in English, "Of the Chirche of Christ, and of hir Membria, and of hir Governauce;" beginning thus—"Christis Chirche is his spouse, that hath three parts," &c. &c. Bib. Reg. 18, 13, ix. It is also in Trin Coll. Dub.

35. *In Apocalypsin Joannis.* The exposition is introduced by a prologue, and the former begins with the words—"The undoyng of Seynt Joon bitokeneth Prelatis of hooli Chirche, that underdondith the vois of the Gospels." Bib. Reg. E. 1732. p. 67.

36. *De Vita Sacerdotum.* "This peril of Freris is the last of eight that falles to men in this way." Bibl. Bodl. Archi. A. 3072.

37. *Speculum secularium Dominorum.* Bibl. Bodl. Archim. A. 2849, Bibl. Reg.

38. *De Incarnatione Verbi.* Bibl. Reg. E. 270 fol. This piece is in Latin; beginning, "Prælibato tractatu De Anima," &c. &c.

39. *De Ecclesiâ Catholicâ*, sometimes called, *De fide Catholica*, is a manuscript preserved in the Bodleian, and a copy taken from it, by Dr. James, is in the Lambeth Library.

40. *De Modo Orandi.* On the twelve lettynge of prayer. Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. Bibl. Bodl.

41. *Epistola ad simplicis Sacerdotes.* This piece does not reach beyond a page, and may be seen in the British Museum. Bib. Reg. 17. B. xvii.

42. *De Virtutibus et Vitiis.* This treats of religious and moral obligations after the fashion of that age. Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. A production of the same kind, but somewhat different from the former, may be seen, Bibl. Reg. 7. A. xxvi. Like the *Pore Caitif*, it was evidently designed to present an epitome of religious instruction to the poorer classes.

43. *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, and *Octo Beati tudines*, are different names of the same discourse. From the Reformer's exposition of the Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, seventy-four erroneous opinions were extracted. There is a sermon under this name in the British Museum, Cott. MSS. Titus, D. xix. But it must have been his more extended exposition of that chapter which supplied his enemies with such material for accusation. MS. Twini. A. 216.

44. *De Papâ Romanâ*, or *Schisma Papæ*. Mr. Baber states that this tract is in the Bodleian. There is a copy in Trin. Coll. Dub.

45. *De questionibus variis contra Clerum*. Lambeth Library, Cott. MSS. 151.

46. In the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is a large manuscript volume, including the following pieces, several of which are known to be those of Wiclif, as the 10th and 11th, which are noticed by Huss; (Lewis c. lx. 179, Baber,) and of the rest, several are attributed to the Reformer in the handwriting of the transcriber. MS. 326. 8. C. 5. 8.

1. *De ente communi*. In primis supponitur ens esse, pp. 1—5.

2. *De ente primo*. Extenso ente secundum ejus maximam ampliationem, pp. 5—9.

3. *De purgando errores, et veritate in communi*. Consequens est purgare errores, pp. 9—15.

4. *De purgando errores, et universalibus in communi*. Tractatu continentur dicta de universalibus, pp. 15—23.

5. *De universalibus*. Tractatus de universalibus continet 16 capitula cujus primum, pp. 23—37.

6. *De tempore*. In tractando de tempore sunt, &c. &c. pp. 37—47.

7. *De intellectione Dei*. Illorum quæ insunt Deo, &c. &c. pp. 47—53.

8. *De scientia Dei*. Ex dictis superius satis liquet, &c. &c. pp. 53—70.

9. *De volitione Dei*. Tractando de volitione Dei, &c. &c. pp. 70—91.

10. *De personarum distinctione*. Superest investigare de distinctione, &c. &c. pp. 91—115.

11. *De ideis*. Tractando de ydeis primo oportet, &c. &c. pp. 115—122.

12. *De potentia productiva Dei*. Veritatum quas Deus non potest renovare, &c. &c. pp. 122—134.

13. *De sermone Domini*. Licet totum Evangelium, pp. 134—141.

47. In a volume preserved in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, is a series of treatises described as follows: Class C. Tab. 1. No. 23.

1. *Tractatus Evangelii de Sermone Domini in Monte, cum Expositorio Orationis Dominicæ*. Dividetur in tres Libros.

2. *Tractatus de Antichristo, cum Expositorio in xxiii. xxiv. xxv. cap. Matthæi*.

3. *Tractatus in Sermonem Domini, quem fecerat valedicendo Discipulis suis*.

4. *Tractatus de Statu Innocentiæ*.

5. *Tractatus de tempore in 13 capitulis*.

6. *Expositio quorundam locorum Scripturæ*, Tit. ii. cap. Heb. i. cap. et Iesaiæ xxv. cap. There is also an Exposition of 1 Thessalonians iv. and of John xi. But these are merely parts of his homilies. The volume extends to 400 pages; and what is peculiar to this collection of Wycliffe's MSS it has a copious index.



1. Trin. Coll. Dub. Class C. Tab. 1. No. 24. *De Simonia.*

2. *De Apostasia.* The first piece extends about forty small folio pages; the second to about half that number; the last consists of about eight pages; viz.

3. *De Blasphemia.*—Another volume in the same library contains a MS. entitled, "*Of apostasy, and the possessions of clerks.*" This volume further contains the following tracts. *Of pseudo friars. Of the eight woes which God wished to friars. Of Antichrist and his ways. Of Antichrist's song in the church. A treatise of prayer. A treatise on confession. A tract of Christian obedience*; beginning—"Christ forsooth did all that he could to obey to lorda." In the volume, there are several separate homilies, meditations on various subjects, and a short treatise, beginning—"How are questions and answers put that are written hereafter." The collection forms a duodecimo volume of about 400 pages, written with a very small, but legible character. Class C. Tab. 5. No. 6.

48. On the Seven Deadly Sins. Bibl. Bodl.

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### SECTION III.

The following pieces are in the Imperial Library of Vienna; the catalogue of which may be seen at the British Museum.

*De minoribus fratribus se extollentibus. De sectis monachorum. De quatuor sectis novellis. De fundatione sectarum. De sectarum perfidia. De solutione Sathanae. De Damonio meridiana. Responsiones ad XIV argumenta Radulphi Strodi. Littera parva ad quendam socium. Speculum militantis ecclesie. De oratione et ecclesie purgatione. De gradibus cleri. De graduationibus. De duobus generibus hereticorum. De quatuor interpretationibus. Super impositis articulis. Socii argumentum contra veritatem. De citationibus frivolis et aliis versutis Antichristi. De juramento Arnoldi (de Grannario) collectoris Papae. De sex fugis. De exhortatione novi doctoris. De ordine Christiano. De vaticinatione. Dialogus inter veritatem et mendacium. Epistola, de peccato in Spiritum Sanctum. Littera parva ad quendam Socium. Littera ad Episcopum Lincoln, de amore, sive de quintuplici questione. Epistola ad Archiepiscopum Cantuar. De Eucharistia et penitentia. De octo questionibus propositis discipulo. De triplici vinculo amoris.*

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### SECTION IV.

The following are the titles of pieces which are known only by these names. Many were on questions of science, and others were probably different designations of the same tracts.

*Questiones logicales. Logica de singulis. Logica de aggregatis. De propositionibus temporalibus. De insolubilibus. De exclusivis et exceptivis. De causalibus. De comparativis. De*

conditionalibus. De disjunctivis. Grammatica tropi. Metaphysica vulgaris. Metaphysica novella. De summâ intellectuum. De formis idealibus. De spiritu quolibet. De speciebus hypotheticis. De esse intelligibili creatura. De esse in suo prolixo. De unâ communis generis essentia. De essentia accidentium. De temporis ampliatione. De physica naturali. De intentione physica. De materia et forma. De materia celestium. De raritate et densitate. De motu locali. De velocitate motus localis. Dialogus de fratribus. Johannes a rure contra fratres. De charitate fraternâ. Dæmonum ætus in subvertendâ religione. De Diabolo millenario. De perverso Antichristi dogmate. Defensio contra impios. Responsiones ad argumenta monachi de Salley. De unitate Christi. De unico soluto Agno. Christus alius non expectandus. De humanitate Christi. De defectione a Christo. De fide et perfidia. De fide sacramentorum. De fide Evangelii. Constitutiones ecclesiæ. De censuris ecclesiæ. De sacerdotio Levitico. De sacerdotio Christi. De statuendis pastorum ad plebem. De ordine sacerdotali. De non saginandis sacerdotibus. De ministrorum conjugio. Cogendi sacerdotes ad honestatem. De ritibus sacramentorum. De quidditate hostiæ consecratæ. De quintuplici Evangelio. De Trinitate. De excommunicationis absolvendis. Distinctiones rerum Theologicarum. De fonte errorum. De falsatoribus legis divinæ. De immortalitate animæ. Cæmoniarum chronicon. De dilectione. Concordantia doctorum. De contrarietate duorum dominorum. De lege divinâ. De necessitate futurorum. De operibus spiritualibus. De operibus corporalibus. De ordinariâ laicorum. De purgatorio piorum. Positiones variæ. Replicationes et positiones. De præcito ad beatitudinem. De quaternario doctorum. De religiosis privatis. De studio lectionis. De servitute civili. Theologiæ placita. De virtute orandi. De compositione hominis. De homine misero. De Scholia scripturarum. Glossæ scripturarum. Glossæ vulgares. Glossæ manuales. Glossæ novella. Lectiones in Daniele.

## SECTION V.

The following works, with the exception of the last, have been improperly attributed to Wiclif.

*De Tribus Sagittis. Speculum Peccatoris. The Confession of St. Brandoun. Ghostly and Fleshly Love.* The two former of these are attributed on better evidence to the Hermit Hampole.

*Commentarii in Psalterium, et Cantica Sacra.* This also is evidently the production of Hampole, (Baber, 54.) The writer of a manuscript note to a copy of this work in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, states that this commentary became popular with the disciples of Wiclif, and that the latter transcripts of it were accordingly greatly interpolated with the doctrine of the Lollards. The correctness of this statement is hardly questionable, and it will sufficiently account for the circumstance of the entire work being ascribed to our Reformer. There is a copy in the British Museum.

*Elucidarium Bibliorum.* Sometimes described as *Prologus ad integrum Bibliorum Versionem*, is the work of which the reader will

find an account in the seventh chapter of this volume. The MS. is in the British Museum, Harl. MSS. 1666. It has been twice printed; first at the press of John Gowghe, in 1536, subsequently by Robert Crowley, in 1550. The title of the first edition is, *The Dore of Holy Scriptures*. In the second, it is thus described. *The pathway to perfect knowledge, the true cōpye of a prologue, wrytten about two hundred yeaeres paste by John Wicliffe, (as maye justly be gathered bi that, that John Bale hath wrytten of him in his Boke, intituled the summarie of the famousse writers of the Isle of Great Britaine,) the original whereof is found wrytten in an old English Bible, betwixt the Olde Testament and the Newe. Which Bible remaineth now in the Kyng his majesties chamber.* That this work was not the production of Wiclif, but of some zealous disciple after his death, is placed beyond doubt by its contents. See Baber, pp. 52, 53, and Lewis, c. ix.

*Ecclesia Regimen* is a work consisting of a series of articles, expressive in almost every sentence of the doctrine of Wiclif. In the copy of these articles in the British Museum, there appears to be a reference to Gerson, the celebrated Parisian divine, which, if so intended, must prove that copy of the work to be of a date subsequent to the time of Wiclif. The piece, however, is evidently a compilation from the writings of our Reformer, whether made by himself or a disciple, as it not only contains a summary of his doctrine, but much of his language.

## APPENDIX.

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### SPECIMENS OF WICLIF'S TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE.

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#### PSALM II.

Wen gnastriden with teeth hethene men, and pupilis thoughten weym thingis. The knyghtis of eerthe stoden to gidre, and princes camen to gidre aghens the Lord and aghens his Crist. Breke we the boondis of hem, and cast we away the yock of hem fro us. He that dwelleth in hevenes schal scorn hem: and the Lord schal bewowe hem. Thanne he schal speke to hem in his ire; and schal distrouble hem in his stronge vengeance. Forsothe I am maad of him a kyng on Sion his hooli hill, prechyng his commandementis. The Lord seide to me, thou art my sone: I have gendred thee to day. Axe thou of me and I shall gheve to thee hethene men thine heritage: and thi possessioun the termes of the eerthe. Thou shalt governe hem in an yren gherd,\* and thou shalt breke hem as a vessel of a potter. And now, ye kyngis, understonde: ye that deemen the erthe be fernid. Serve ye to the Lord with dreed: and make ye, ful oute, joie to him with trembling. Take ye lore: leest the Lord be wrooth sumtyme: and leest ye perischen fro the right weye. Whaune his ire brenneth oute in shorte tyme, blessed ben alle thei that tristene in him.—*Public Lib. Camb. Dd. I. 27.*

#### PSALM XVIII.

Lord mi strenkthe, I schal love thee. The Lord is my stedfastnesse and my refuyt, and my deliverer. My God is myne helper, and I shall hope into hym: my defender and the horne of my helpe, and myne uptaker. I schal preise and inwardli clapet the Lord, and I schal be saaf fro myne enemies. The sorrowis of deeth compassiden me, and the floodis of wickidnesse distroubliden me. The sorowis of helle compassiden, the anaris of deeth bifore occupiden me. In my tribulacioun I inwardli clepide the Lord, and I cried to my God: and he herde my vois fro his hooli temple, and my crie in his sight entride into his aeris. The erthe was movid to gidre, and tremblid to gidre. The foundementis of the hillis weren troublid to gidre, and weren movid to gidre, for he was wroth to hem. Smoke flyede in the ire of him, and fier brent out fro his face: coolis weren kyndlid of him. He bowyde down hevenes and came down, and darkenesse was under his feet. And he

\* An iron yard, or rod.

† Call upon.

flyede on Cherubym, and he fleye over the pennis of wyndis. He astyde derkenessis his hidyng place, his tabernacle in his cumpass. Derk watir was in the cloudis of the lower air. Ful cleer cloudis passiden in his sight; hail and the coolis of fier. And the Lord thundride from hevene, and the highest yewe his vois: hail and the coolis of fier camen down. And he sente his arewis, and distroied the men. He multiplied leytis,\* and distroublide hem. And the wellis of wateris apperiden; and the foundementis of the erthe weren schewid. Lord, of thi blamyng, of the brething of the spirit of thin ire.—*Pub. Lib. Camb. Dd. I. 27.*

## MATTHEW, CHAP. V.

And Jhesus seynge the people, went up into an hill; and whanne he was sett, his discipulis camen to him. And he openyde his mouthe, and taughte hem; and seide, Blessid be pore men in spirit; for the kyngdom of hevenes is herun.† Blessid ben myide men: for thei schulen weelde the erthe. Blessid ben thei that mournen; for thei schal be coumfortid. Blessid be thei that hungren and thirsten rigtwisnesse:‡ for thei schal be fulfilled. Blessid ben merciful men: for thei schul gete mercy. Blessid ben thei that ben of cleue berte: for thei schulen se god. Blessid ben pesible men: for thei schulen be clepid goddis children. Blessid ben thei that suffren persecucioun for rightwisnesse: for the knyngdom of hevenes is hern. Ye schul be blessid whanne men schul curse you, and schul pursue you: and schul seye al yvel agens you liynge for me. Jole ye and be ye glade: for your meede is plenteous in hevenes: for so thei han pursued also prophetis that weren bfore you. Ye ben salt of the erthe, that if the salt vanishe away wherynne schal it be salted? to nothing it is worth over, no but it be cast out, and be defouled of men. Ye ben light of the world, a citee sett on an hill may not be hid. Ne me teendith not a lanterne and puttith it undir a bushel: but on a candlestik that it give light to alle that ben in the hous. So, schyne your light bfore men, that thei see youre gods workis, and glorifie your fadir that is in hevenes. Nyie ghe deme that I cam to undo the Lawe or the prophetis, I cam not to undo the lawe but to fulfill. Forsothe I sey to you till hevene and erthe passe, oon letre, or oon ticle, schal not passe fro the Lawe til alle thingis be don. Therefore he that brekith oon of these leeste maundementis, and techith thus men, schal be clepid the Leest in the rewme of hevenes: but he that doth, and techith, schal be clepid gret in the kyngdom of hevenes.—*Baber's Edit.*

## I CORYNTH. XIII.

If I speke with tungis of men and of aungels and I have not charite, I am mead as bras sownynge, or a cymbal tynklygne, and if I have profecie and knowe alle mysteries and al kynnyng, and if I have al feith, so that I moue hillis fro her place, and I have not charite I am nought. and if I departe alle my goodis into the metis of pore men, and if I bitake my bodi so toat I brenne and if I have not charite it profitith to me no thing. charite is patient, it is benynge.§ charite enuyeth not, it doith not wickidli, it is not blowun,¶ it is not coueitous, it sekith not tho thingis that bep hys own. It is not stired to wrauththe, it thankith not youel, it joleteth not on wickidnesse, but it ioleteth to treuthe, it suffrieth alle

\* Lights, or lightnings.

† Theirs.

‡ Rightfulness MS. plures.

§ Benign.

¶ Puffed up.

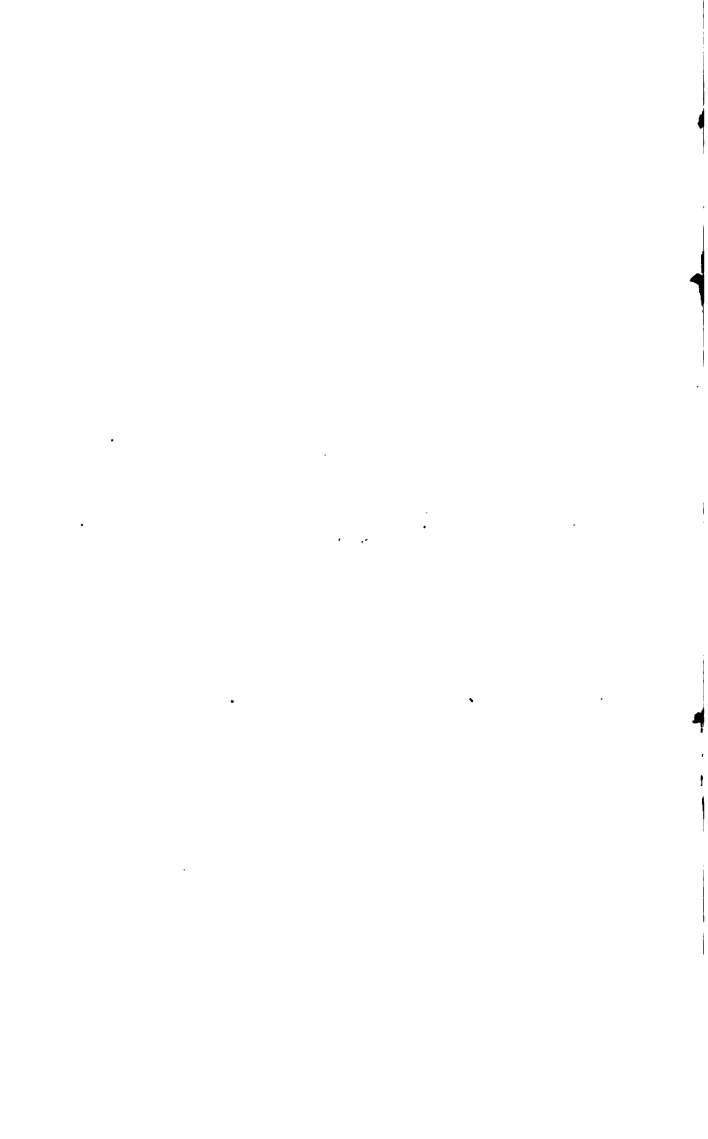
thingis, it bileueth alle thingis, it hopith alle thingis, it susteyneth alle thingis. charite fellith neuere down. whethir profecies schulen be voided, eithir langagis schulen ceese, eithir science schal be destried. for aparti\* we knowen, and aparti we profecien, but whanne that schal come that is parfyt, that thing that is of parti schal be auoidid. whanne I was a litil child I spak as a litil child, I undirstood as a litil child, I thoughte as a litil child; but whaane I was maade a man I voidide tho thingis that weren of a litil child. and we seen now by a myrour† in derknesse,‡ but thanne face to face. now I knowe of parti, but thanne I schal knowe as I am knowun. and now dwellen feith, hope and charite thess thre, but the moost of these is charite.—*Baber's Edit.*

\* ex parte.

† speculum.

‡ in enigmate.

THE END.



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